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THE VINCENT MELZAC COLLECTION

MODERNIST AMERICAN ART

FEATURING

NEW YORK ABSTRACT EXPRESSIONISM

AND

WASHINGTON COLOR PAINTING

THE CORCORAN GALLERY OF ART

WASHINGTON, D. C.

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133. STILL, Indian Red and Black, 1946

FOREWORD

This publication brings to fruition a project that began officially in 1968 at the Corcoran Gallery of Art. The project was to bring together, document, and esthetically evaluate the art works collected over many years by a remarkable man, Vincent Melzac. From Mr. Melzac's total collection the finest material was to have been selected and presented as a major exhibition with an appropriate catalog documenting the occasion as well as the scope of the total collection itself. All of this has now been accomplished.

These accomplishments are in line with a tradition that goes back many years at the Corcoran. For example, during the past 16 years the Corcoran has presented 12 important private collections to the general and scholarly public of the Nation's Capital. Notable examples include: the Honorable and Mrs. Francis Biddle collection shown in 1957; the Mr. and Mrs. David Lloyd Kreeger collection shown in 1965; the H. Marc Moyens collection shown in 1969; and the Donald Karshan collection shown in 1971. One hopes for a future that will allow periodic presentations of collections as important as these to a broad public who might otherwise rarely or never see great art works privately owned.

Both the publication of this catalog and the exhibition it documents (*Selections from the Vincent Melzac Collection*, Corcoran Gallery of Art, December 19, 1970-January 24, 1971) stand for several reasons as important events. Both bring before the general and professional public in various ways a body of exceedingly important American paintings produced within the past three decades. Both further reveal and underscore the vitality and significance of work produced by a number of artists whose careers were, and are, associated with Washington. Both celebrate the efforts and achievements of Vincent Melzac, whose endeavors as a collector have not been without legend, even mystery.

The focus of Vincent Melzac's interests is made clear in this catalog's subtitle, "Modernist American Art Featuring New York Abstract Expressionism and Washington Color Painting." Only two works of sculpture are included in the more than 500 works of the total collection, and, although numerous drawings and studies are included, paintings predominate.

There are 131 works cataloged in the final section of this publication. At least one work by each of the artists in the total collection has been included. Of the 131 works cataloged, the 93 paintings exhibited at the end of 1970 (by far the largest public presentation to date of Mr. Melzac's holdings) are noted with asterisks. The catalog section is organized alphabetically; the listing for each artist includes a short biography and his works in chronological order with at least one major example of each of his major periods wherever possible. Where they apply, notations are included of previous exhibitions and publications. Explanatory paragraphs are inserted wherever possible to indicate the continuity of the listed works.

James Harithas was Director at the Corcoran when the Vincent Melzac project began. Upon assuming this position myself I was amply aided by James Pilgrim, former Curator of American Art and Chief Curator at the Corcoran, who selected the 93 works for exhibition.

Very special thanks are due Ellen Gross Landau, formerly a Research Assistant with the Corcoran's Curatorial Department, who devoted time spanning more than two years researching and cataloging this collection. Mrs. Landau faithfully and diligently served Mr. Pilgrim and myself in almost every area of this project.

The Corcoran is indebted to Barbara Rose, whose important and comprehensive essay, "Notes on the Washington Color Painters," receives its first publication in this catalog.

I am grateful to all who have helped the Corcoran staff compile facts about the art in the Melzac collection and certain crucial events affecting art produced in Washington. These include: Nesta Dorrance of Washington's pioneering Jefferson Place Gallery; Jacob Kainen, who not only is one of the city's most distinguished artists but an unexcelled chronicler and connoisseur; Cornelia Noland; Howard Mehring and Paul Reed, who have shared intimately and continue to participate in this city's esthetic development; and Gertrude Rosenthal, the former Curator of the Baltimore Museum of Art. Vincent Melzac himself has been generous with his time and records with all those undertaking research for this project. Thanks are due Howard Landau and Dorothy Phillips, Research Curator of Collections for the Corcoran, who have edited and corrected all manuscripts.

I must here mention that among all members of the Corcoran staff who have in innumerable ways made possible the exhibition and catalog of the Vincent Melzac collection, I am particularly grateful for the skilled assistance of the Corcoran's former Associate Director, Hal Glicksman; my Administrative Assistant, Frances Fralin; and the Corcoran's Registrar, Martha Morris.

There are certain personal commitments that Vincent Melzac and I share in common, even as we attempt to fulfill them in different ways. These commitments center in a desire to know and further the art of our own time and place. For many years now Vincent Melzac has extended his time, energy and financial resources to help the development of Washington art. My commitment to the artists of Washington and the public institutions which can present it began when I came here in January 1967. With all else that it has achieved and effected, the Vincent Melzac collection will act, either intact as it is now, or dispersed to public museums and galleries as it is likely to be in the future, as a testament to the creative energies of the artists it represents.

Walter Hopps, *Director*
Corcoran Gallery of Art

INTRODUCTION

Art collecting in America, until the late 1920's, was mainly limited to safe Old Master or 19th century French paintings. In the 1930's some far-seeing collectors began to focus their efforts on acquiring the work of more contemporary American artists and, by the 1950's, museums and art patrons, particularly in New York, which had emerged after World War II as a major creative art center, began actively to buy and support living Americans.

It was a different story in Washington, D.C. Prior to World War II virtually all collecting and presentations of modern art were undertaken by the extraordinary Duncan Phillips, founder of the Phillips Gallery. During the 1950's public institutions, including the Corcoran, the National Collection of Fine Arts, and the National Gallery, were only marginally interested in living American artists, let alone those working in the Washington area. Very few commercial galleries seriously undertook the exhibition of local artists. Few collectors or institutions here were buying contemporary art. It was at this time that Vincent Melzac moved to the Washington area from the midwest. Local artist, Jacob Kainen, states that it became clear to the art community that Melzac had the instincts of a collector, that he thought in big terms and was operating on an advanced level. He seemed willing not only to talk to area artists about their work, but was ready and able to "put money on the line."

Vincent Melzac's interest in art began early in the 1930's. While attending high school in Cleveland, Ohio, he was invited by a friend to go sketching at the Brandywine farm of American Impressionist painter, William Sommer. Melzac came away from that visit with his first art acquisition: a Sommer drawing which cost him one dollar. He attended Sommer's informal weekend drawing classes regularly after that and a deep and lasting friendship with the artist developed. Melzac continued to buy Sommer drawings and oils while attending Western Reserve University and these still remain in the collection, constituting one of the largest groups of work by this artist outside of the midwest.

Melzac had to put aside his interest in art during World War II. However, he was able to indulge this interest again after the war when he became an executive of the Wolf and Dessauer department store in Fort Wayne, Indiana. His broad-minded boss encouraged executives of the company to become involved in community activities so he became a trustee of the Fort Wayne Art Museum and began arranging shows of American art there. He traveled frequently to New York and became friendly with several art dealers including Alan D. Gruskin, owner of the Midtown Galleries. Midtown had been founded to present and promote works by living American artists, and Melzac borrowed works for his shows from the Midtown stable which included Isabel Bishop and Paul Cadmus, among others. Few people came to these shows at first so Melzac began writing an art column for the Sunday *Fort Wayne Journal* to publicize them. The exhibits and attendance greatly increased. He also arranged lectures at the museum including one by Alan Gruskin.



67. DE KOONING, The Wave, 1942-44

In 1949 Melzac moved to Washington, D. C. Soon after arriving with his family, he decided to find out what was happening on the local art scene. He was attracted to The American University. William Calfee was head of the department there and, employing visiting professors, lecturers, etc., Calfee had greatly increased the awareness, on the part of the A.U. faculty, of the significance of post-war New York painting. Melzac acquainted himself with A.U. professors Joe Summerford, Jim McLaughlin, Leonard Maurer, and Robert Gates, and began to buy and sell their works for small sums. He also met art critic Clement Greenberg at A.U. and artist Jack Tworikov, as well as a young painter, Kenneth Noland.

Melzac began to have Noland and his wife over to his house where they would sit all night, often with Joe Summerford, talking about painting. Cornelia Noland remembers Melzac's passion for argument and discussion about art and the stories he would tell of the artists and dealers he knew in New York. Melzac constantly challenged her husband, she recalls. "He was curious to know why Ken thought his painting was good, better, best." Melzac bought a few small Klee-like oils from Noland at this point (see cat. no. 104) and encouraged his friends to buy from Noland too.

On one of his trips to New York, Melzac was introduced to Willem de Kooning by Jack Tworikov. De Kooning was generous with his time and his talent and often asked Melzac to accompany him to the Cedar Street Tavern, on University Place off Eighth Street (the informal meeting spot for New York artists in the fifties). Melzac also went with de Kooning to several Friday night sessions of The Club, a more formalized group which had grown out of Subjects of the Artists School and Studio 35, congregating point for advanced artists during the 1940's.

Through de Kooning, Melzac met critic Harold Rosenberg and such artists as Franz Kline, Esteban Vicente, Philip Guston, Jackson Pollock, Robert Motherwell, Ad Reinhardt and Richard Pousette-Dart. Later, toward the mid-fifties, he met Mike Goldberg, Al Leslie, Mike Kanemitsu, Grace Hartigan, Alan Fenton, Joan Mitchell, George Spaventa, Norman Bluhm, and Larry Rivers, younger painters who followed de Kooning's lead. Melzac acquired as many of their works as he could afford. He admired the paintings he had seen by Clyfford Still and one day went to Still's studio, hoping to see some more. Melzac did not expect the warm welcome he received from the reputedly difficult artist, or the exciting three-hour session they spent together. He could not afford to buy anything at that time and, later, when he finally could afford a Still, none were to be had. (This past year Melzac was finally able to purchase a 1946 Clyfford Still—see cat. no. 130).

Melzac became convinced in 1953 that paintings by some of the New York artists should be shown in the Washington area. However, he had no luck trying to convince the Washington museums. After several meetings with Director Adelyn Breeskin and her Curator, Gertrude Rosenthal, he persuaded the Baltimore Museum of Art to show the paintings of de Kooning, Tworikov, Guston, Vicente, and Pollock. Thomas Hess, Editor of *Art News* magazine, wrote the catalogue, and Melzac himself chose the paintings for the show which included Pollock's 1953 *No. 11* (later known as *Blue Poles*) and de Kooning's 1948-49 *Asheville*. (Melzac had, a year earlier, sold *Asheville* to Duncan Phillips, making it the first de Kooning in a major public collection.) Gertrude Rosenthal remembers being "absolutely floored" by the impact of *Blue Poles*, which Melzac encouraged the museum to acquire. At the time they could not afford \$3,000 for a work now worth at least a hundred times that much.



They did buy a painting, *Landscape*, by Jack Tworkov. Dr. Rosenthal states that this small show, "Abstract Expressionists," organized by Vincent Melzac and held March 3 through March 29, 1953, was "absolutely a milestone for the Baltimore Museum." A similar, larger exhibition was later held at the Watkins Gallery at American U.

Around this time, Melzac toyed with the idea of becoming an art dealer. The combination of an excellent business sense, a strong acquisitive instinct, and an even stronger desire to help talented, but struggling, artists could have made a venture of this sort successful. De Kooning left the Egan Gallery at this point and encouraged Melzac to found a gallery by promising that the entire Egan stable would join, along with de Kooning himself. But Melzac was involved with other business considerations and thus let the opportunity slip by.

Four years later, the Watkins Gallery at A.U. mounted an exhibition of Melzac's collection. Works by Norman Bluhm, Gene Davis, de Kooning, Harry Eisenberg, Louis Elshemius, Michael Goldberg, Robert Goodnough, Mike Kanemitsu, Franz Kline, Kenneth Noland, Paul Reed, Milton Resnick, Larry Rivers, William Sommer, George Spaventa and Joe Summerford were included in this show, which was held November 9 - December 7, 1957. Joe Summerford, Chairman of the Art Department, wrote the introduction to the small catalogue. In it he stated:

Mr. Melzac has purchased unpretentiously, but with discrimination, preferring to buy a number of works by artists whose work has appealed to him rather than to attempt to form a collection representative of a particular period. He has, it seems to me, never purchased names. The support he has given artists wherever he has lived has been a service to art and a reflection of his own sincerity . . .

Melzac himself wrote:

People invariably are interested in the reasons for a collector's choice. And my choice, as this exhibition clearly shows, is to buy and urge others to buy work created by artists who live during our own times. At first, this policy was dictated simply by economic necessity . . . Later it became founded on the growing awareness of the historical fact that some excellent art is produced in every generation . . . It is gratifying to me to see that some of the artists whose work I have championed early have now gained national reputations and—in a few instances—international stature. However, my choice frequently is satisfied with the evidence of the artist's struggle to achieve good painting, even if this effort does not result in the attainment of that lofty objective . . .

In the meantime, something new was happening on the Washington scene. Leon and Ida Berkowitz had formed the Washington Workshop Center for the Arts in 1952 as a cooperative venture. Among the artists associated with the Workshop were Kenneth Noland and Morris Louis. On a trip to New York together in 1953 Louis and Noland went with critic Clement Greenberg to the studio of Helen Frankenthaler. Her 1952 painting, *Mountains and Sea*, showed them the immense possibilities inherent in Jackson Pollock's 1951 works in which paint was literally soaked into unprimed canvas and, as soon as they returned to Washington, they began to experiment with the use of soaked, or stained, acrylic color. By the time of the Melzac collection exhibition at American University, they were using their discoveries to point up the expressive potential of pure color and, especially Noland, influencing others to do the same.





11. BLUHM, Eudocia, 1967

Among the Washington artists who undertook this staining method were Gene Davis, Thomas Downing, Howard Mehring and Paul Reed. At this time Vincent Melzac lived across the street from Paul Reed. After seeing several stain paintings in Reed's house in 1963, he inquired as to who else was doing this kind of work. Since Louis had died of lung cancer and Noland had left Washington by this time, Reed recommended the work of Downing and Mehring. Melzac telephoned these artists right on the spot and, ever since then, has avidly supported their efforts. With the help of Clement Greenberg and the Andre Emmerich Gallery, he also acquired stain paintings by Louis and Noland.

Learning that Howard Mehring wanted to quit teaching and paint full-time, Melzac formulated an agreement with him whereby he bought the contents of a room full of old paintings to finance such a move. Although their arrangement was subsequently dissolved, the Melzac collection has retained half the contents of that room. During their association Melzac was instrumental in arranging Mehring's first New York show at the Sachs Gallery. Melzac also bought five Gene Davis paintings at one time to help him have an exhibition at New York's Poindexter Gallery. Melzac was consulted when Davis, Mehring and Downing were being considered by Clement Greenberg for inclusion in the Los Angeles County Museum "Post Painterly Abstraction" show (April 23 - June 7, 1964). He has continued to support and promote these artists by lending, and in many instances, by donating their works to major museums. The Washington Gallery of Modern Art, the Corcoran, the Philadelphia Museum of Art, the Wadsworth Atheneum in Hartford, Connecticut, the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis, Minnesota, the San Francisco Museum of Art, the Oklahoma Art Center, Oklahoma City and the National Collection of Fine Arts have benefited from this.

The Melzac collection has gone through many changes over the years as works have been sold or given away and replaced by others. Mr. Melzac's policy of buying, in depth, works by artists he admires, has resulted in a collection comprising approximately fifty works by William Sommer (spanning the years 1904-1949), fifty-five by Norman Bluhm (1957-69), thirty-two by Jack Bush (1960-68), sixty-eight by Tom Downing (1955-70), twenty-two by Gene Davis (1953-65), over one hundred seventy-five by Howard Mehring (1954-65), as well as seven Louis' (1954-61), ten Noland's (1951-64) and many others, bringing the total to over five hundred works.

Melzac has not only acquired finished paintings, but drawings, paint sketches, and unfinished works. He bought many of these from artists at critical points in their careers when they needed money to develop new ideas. The result is a collection which provides extraordinary insight into the working process of many important artists. Works from transitional periods which have rarely been shown are included. The most notable of these is Morris Louis' *Untitled*, 1956 (cat. no. 74), one of a series of gestural works Louis himself destroyed. This painting, bought by Melzac from the collection of critic Kenneth Sawyer, is one of the few known Louis' of this period surviving today.

Vincent Melzac has taken many risks, buying, according to his instincts, artists to whose aims he was able, in some measure, to respond. He has rarely bought work by an artist he did not know personally. Kandinsky, the only European he ever bought (which he subsequently sold) is an exception; Morris Louis is another. In the case of Louis, however, although he did not know the artist, he was in touch with Louis' aims through Greenberg, their mutual friend.

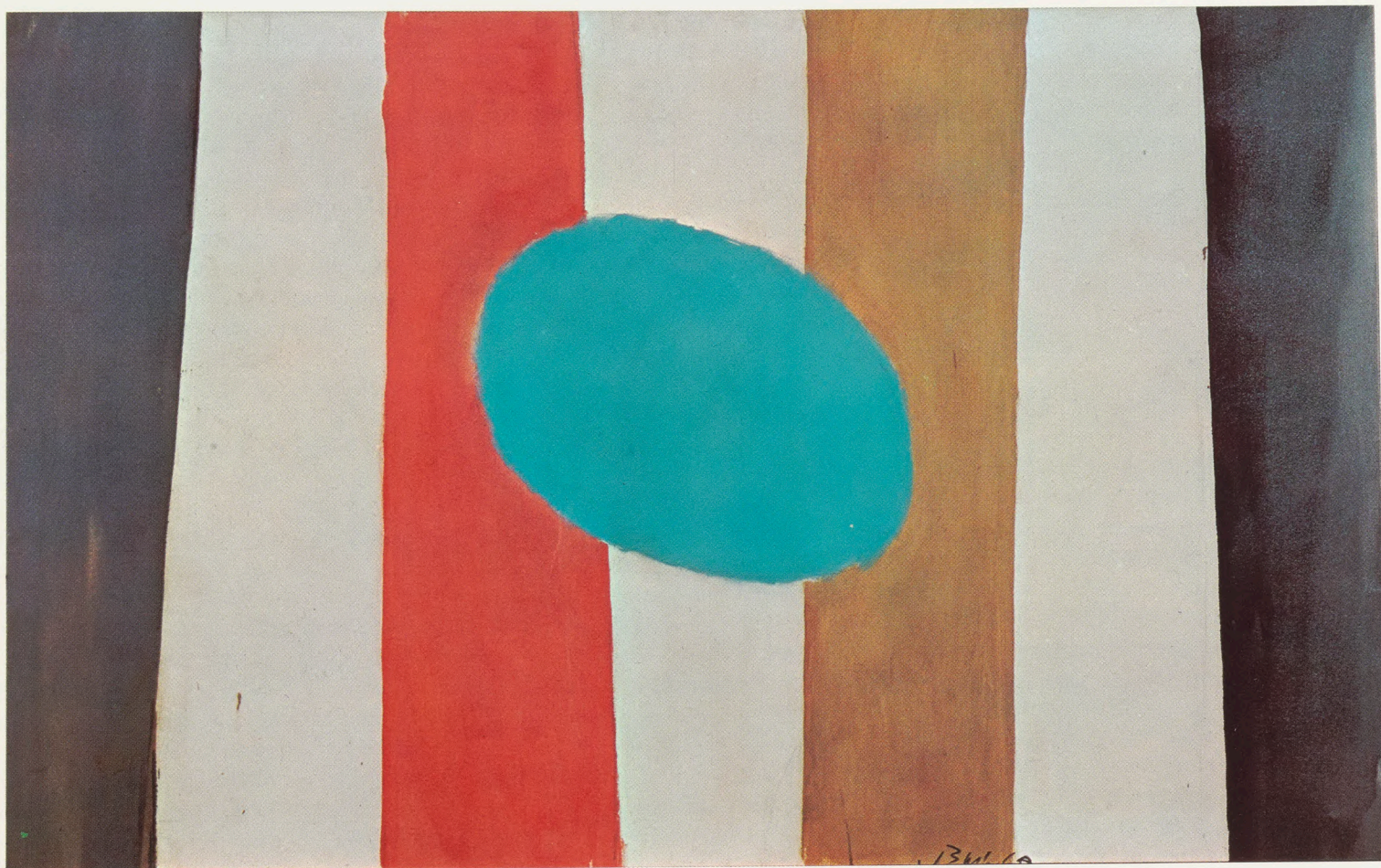
In viewing the entire Melzac collection and its development, perhaps the achievements and sensibilities of two germinal artists, de Kooning and Noland, establish, in turn, two types or phases of emphasis. In the earlier period of Melzac's collecting the abstract expressionist works of de Kooning dominate, and many artists reflecting the concerns and, in a most general sense, the sensibility of de Kooning, are evident. Such artists associated with the New York School in the Melzac collection include Bluhm, Goldberg, Kline and Fenton, among others.

From the time of Melzac's commitment to Noland's work begins his passionate interest in what has come to be known as "Washington Color Painting." This phrase was coined by Gerald Nordland, Director of the former Washington Gallery of Modern Art, in 1965. Nordland presented for the first time together, in an exhibition called *The Washington Color Painters*, the six key artists (Louis, Noland, Davis, Downing, Mehring, and Reed), whose achievements he identified as constituting a vital manifestation in the course of American art. This exhibition, held at the Washington Gallery of Modern Art in the summer of 1965, subsequently toured institutions in Texas, California, Massachusetts, and Minnesota. With the exception of small one-man and group exhibitions in Washington galleries and an occasional canvas on view in a public museum, few other presentations of Washington Color Painting in the District of Columbia or elsewhere have occurred until just two years ago. Since 1969 however a sequence of group exhibitions featuring, in various ways, artists associated with Washington's unique contributions have appeared outside Washington, D. C., in Arizona, Canada, Florida, Maryland, and Wisconsin, thus focussing national and international attention on the contributions of the Washington school.

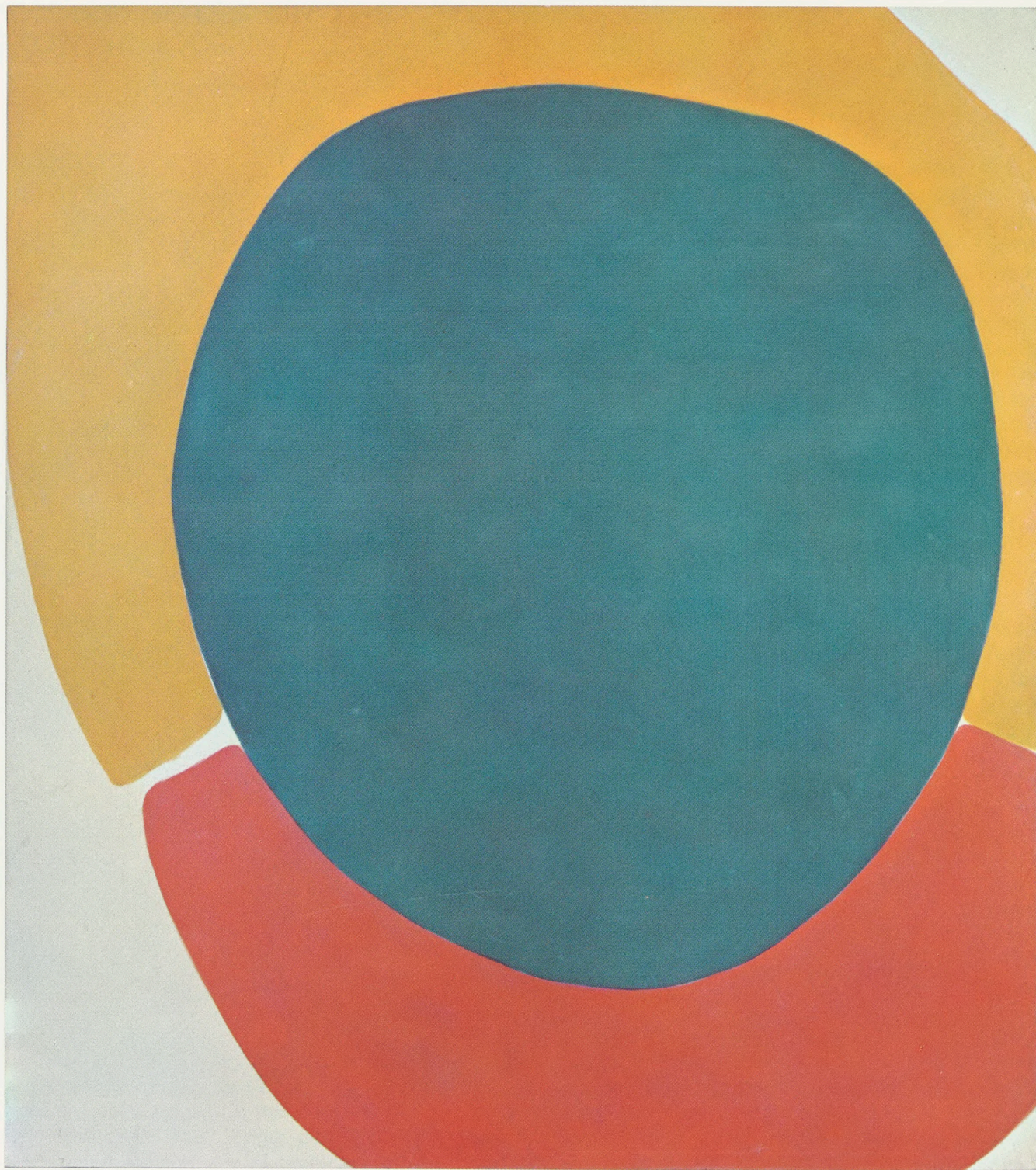
Six years have passed since Nordland's initial presentation of the Washington Color Painters. In the winter of 1970-71 this city finally had another opportunity to see together major examples of Washington Color Painting, when the exhibition, *The Vincent Melzac Collection* was presented at the Corcoran. This exhibition constituted an important event in the history of Washington art. It afforded the public an unparalleled opportunity to experience this work in the context of other important contemporary American paintings as well as making possible, for the first time, in-depth comparisons of the achievements of the respective artists. The Corcoran exhibition however merely scratched the surface of the Vincent Melzac Collection, the most comprehensive grouping anywhere of the works of the artists associated with the pioneering development of Washington color art.

The Vincent Melzac Collection, taken as a whole, is the unique achievement of a singularly dedicated and determined man. This collection stands as an invaluable body of material for scholars of contemporary art; the full range of its importance has only begun to be measured.

Ellen Gross Landau



13. BUSH, Robbins Egg (sic), 1960



113. OLITSKI, Cadmium Orange of Dr. Frankenstein, 1962



73. LOUIS, Spreading, 1954

RETROSPECTIVE NOTES ON THE WASHINGTON SCHOOL

As weaker work recedes from memory and stronger art manifests its durability, the history of post-War American painting should be undergoing constant revision. Yet, too often, new data is not examined, nor are previous critical judgments evaluated or refined. The Corcoran exhibition of the Vincent Melzac Collection seems an excellent occasion for such reappraisal as the collection contains some of the finest examples of the initial phase of American color painting, the dominant style of current modernist abstraction. That this crucial formative phase took place not in New York, but in Washington; not in full view of the media, but in relative obscurity, makes its study that much more urgent.

A group show of works by Washington artists represented in the Melzac Collection, including not only Louis and Noland, but also Howard Mehring, Tom Downing, Gene Davis and Paul Reed, reveals that their paintings are related in many essential respects. These include the all-over design, single image formats and the stain technique that came to be the hallmark of the Washington School. Most important, however, is the common preoccupation with color as both subject matter and expressive content.

The existence of such unifying stylistic characteristics reveals that Washington artists had common sources. They had a similar stylistic development as well, away from a painterly all-over lyrical style toward a more tightly structured, architectonic and fully abstract style. These stylistic common denominators allow us to identify Washington in traditional art historical terms as a provincial school, but a provincial school of seminal originality and importance, a phenomenon virtually unique in the history of American art.

During the fifties, Washington developed gradually but effectively as a provincial center close enough to New York not to be totally removed from mainstream developments. Geographically, Washington was ideally suited to emerge as a situation in which mainstream art could receive a local inflection, eventually to be diverted in a new direction. Like Mantua in the fifteenth century, Toledo in the sixteenth, and Seville and Naples in the seventeenth century, Washington, D.C. during the nineteen-fifties was a place where artists could receive information regarding mainstream developments through hearsay, occasional trips and visitors, and of course through reproductions, an especially important source in any provincial situation.

Just as prints had communicated images to provincial art centers before the invention of photography, reproductions have played a large role in spreading visual information regarding modern art. Many developments in provincial painting may be accounted for on the basis of differences between originals and reproductions; indeed transformations in imagery are often a result of the partial and fragmentary nature of what can be communicated through reproduction. That local painters had relatively little exposure to the actual physical facture and surface of Abstract Expressionist paintings, known largely through reproduction, should be considered as perhaps another reason an impersonal matte surface and non-painterly technique was developed in Washington.

I. The Early Years

By this time, the early history of the Washington School is a matter of undisputed record. Important events include the founding of the Institute of Contemporary Art in 1947, the year Morris Louis moved to Washington, and Leon Berkowitz became the Director of the Washington Workshop Center. Directed by Robert Richman, the Institute of Contemporary Art filled a function somewhat like that of the Artists' Club in New York by sponsoring lectures, talks and readings. Hayter, Gabo and Albers, as well as other avant-garde figures were invited to speak there. Studio classes, some taught by Kenneth Noland after his arrival in Washington in 1949, were held at the I.C.A. as well. Classes and exhibitions were also conducted at the Washington Workshop Center, where Jacob Kainen, Morris Louis and later Kenneth Noland taught. As informal meeting places, the I.C.A. and the Workshop were the hub of the small circle of serious modern artists active in Washington.

Although much information reached Washington painters through reproduction, there were also first-hand contacts with New York art and New York artists. Jack Tworckov, for example, taught at American University in the early fifties, and de Kooning also lectured there. The art department of American University was an active center. Later Catholic University, where Kenneth Noland taught and arranged exhibitions, became important. In fact it was at American University that Vincent Melzac first encountered New York critic Clement Greenberg in 1949.

Greenberg, who had met Noland at Black Mountain College, was in Washington often to visit relatives. During these visits he naturally became acquainted with members of the small local Washington art world. According to Melzac, Greenberg had an important influence, not only among artists, but also in shaping his taste as a collector, and a number of Melzac's paintings appear in early catalogues as belonging to Greenberg.

Greenberg obviously played an important role in informing Washington artists regarding developments in New York. But Greenberg's view of the New York school was highly partial. He was best known at the time as the friend and champion of Jackson Pollock, whose work he had courageously praised for the first time in a celebrated review published in 1951. Because Greenberg acted as a filter, so to speak, for New York art, Washington artists were spared the confusion of the Tenth Street phase of action painting. They were introduced directly to Pollock and Frankenthaler through Greenberg, which put them years ahead of most New York painters who, over a decade later, are only now beginning to study Pollock closely and apply his technical and formal inventions to color painting. In having only a partial picture concerning day to day developments in New York, Washington painters were lucky; for it appears from today's vantage point that Greenberg was right in his appraisal of the situation. Apparently Greenberg had the ability to see and to verbalize, before many, if any, artists saw it themselves that a post-Cubist style of abstraction had to come from a synthesis of Pollock's all-over structure combined with Matisse's saturated color. In lectures, informal talks and social contacts, he articulated his prophetic views which were taken more seriously in Washington than in New York.

Unquestionably the debt of the Washington School, and for that matter of American painting generally, to Clement Greenberg is immense.¹ Indeed Washington is but another—although in fact the first—of the several provincial schools Greenberg catalyzed by proselytizing in behalf of his vision of a high art linking elements from Impressionism and Fauvism (although he may not have referred to them as such). These two pre-Cubist mainstream styles were concerned with color and opticality rather than with the value painting and tactility that characterized Cubism. Ultimately, an emphasis on the former qualities would defeat the vestiges of Cubism remaining in Abstract Expressionism. Greenberg seemed to realize this very early.

The major difference between Greenberg's activity in and out of Washington is that in the various former colonies of the British Empire where he subsequently spread his doctrine, the results have been meager and basically decorative. In Washington, on the other hand, through fortuitous coincidence, Greenberg came into contact with an inspired group of artists capable of genuine development even beyond the axioms he posited.





76. LOUIS, Faces, 1959

II. Origins of the Stair Technique

In the spring of 1953 Noland and Louis made their historic pilgrimage to New York to see Helen Frankenthaler's *Mountains and Sea*, the first color painting utilizing the stain technique. That same year, a de Kooning exhibition was held at the Washington Workshop—the brochure contained a brief preface by Greenberg—and Melzac talked director Adelyn Breeskin into holding a major exhibit of the leading Abstract Expressionists at the Baltimore Museum. Because of this exposure to New York art, by 1954 Washington artists had enough of an idea of the look of Abstract Expressionism to imitate Gorky, de Kooning and Kline. Only Louis, however, was at this point sufficiently daring or mature to attempt to follow Pollock's example. Several black and white works such as the 1951 *Charred Journal* paintings document Louis' early interest in Pollock. Because he had obviously already been thinking about Pollock, Louis was readier to understand how Frankenthaler was using the method she adapted from Pollock's 1951 paintings, using Duco enamel dripped and poured into raw canvas to create a new technique for sinking color directly into unprimed cotton duck.

Inspired by Frankenthaler's technique, Louis painted his first series of veils in 1954. These visionary works come closer to Pollock's drip paintings than any other paintings made since. By spilling and pouring paint, Louis was able to create for the first and last time since Pollock, an image as "automatic" in execution and as indissolubly whole in appearance as Pollock's interwoven meshes of dripped paint. As we shall see, Louis' innovative process of applying paint allowed him to efface manual gesture entirely. This in turn annulled the separation between painting and drawing still linking Frankenthaler to Gorky, Kandinsky and Miro, and consequently to earlier art in which painting and drawing were separable elements.²

In their capacity to synthesize the traditionally antithetical elements of painting, *disegno* and *colore*, Louis' veils were the most "advanced" painting of their time. Indeed, they defined the limits of painting in a manner which has not yet been superseded by any more comprehensive or complex synthesis, despite two decades of experimentation by younger artists.

It is interesting that Louis initially conceived the veils while Pollock himself was still alive and struggling to find another fresh synthesis yet more radical and more absolute than that of the drip paintings. In many respects, Louis' veils solve the problem Pollock himself could not resolve: that is, how to create an image even more compressed, immediately communicable and wholistic than that of the drip paintings. In these revolutionary works, Pollock had already synthesized painting and drawing, eliminating the shape defining function of line as closed contour, with his swelling painterly line. This was a fundamental step toward the creation of a post-Cubist abstraction. The next step

meant merging image with ground, so as to create a structure independent not only of Cubist shapes, but also of the background-foreground discontinuities they created, which gave the illusion of shallow space defined through a series of receding planes.

By folding the canvas vertically, apparently draping it over a trough, and pouring paint down into the folded channels, Louis coalesced the process of creating an image with its resultant structure. He also found a unique way of referring the image to its frame through this process. Not all the early veils, however, relate image to frame so explicitly. It appears only some were made by pleating and folding the canvas; others seem worked more freely. We understand the importance of the structural element in those early veils in which paint was poured into vertical channels when we examine Louis' second series of veils done in 1958, which are in many ways a critical revision of the initial veils. In these, the flow of paint in vertical patterns parallel with the side edges of the frame is consistently emphasized, insuring the visual coupling of image with frame.

Thus Louis' 1958 veils are refinements of the original 1954 veils, the best of which, in terms of unity and coherence, are those that explicitly stress image-frame relationships by emphasizing vertical flow. By contrast, the series of paintings related to the veils known as "florals," done in 1959 as a kind of coda to the 1958 veils, in which color is allowed to spread laterally, are weaker works because they lack the explicit relational structure of the veils.

Helen Frankenthaler proved that color could be used with originality and daring and given a highly personal inflection. For various reasons, Washington was the ideal place for her discoveries to take hold because the ground had already been prepared there for the development of a color art. Noland, for example, was already especially sensitive to color, having studied at Black Mountain College, where he was exposed to Albers' theory of the interaction of adjacent colors, a modernized Bauhaus version of neo-Impressionist color theory based on the writings of Eugène Chevreul.

Frankenthaler was, to quote Louis, "the bridge between Pollock and what was possible." For his part, Louis was able to arrive at what one must term a new definition of painting, so complete was his revision of Cubist canons. This revision was begun by Pollock and Frankenthaler, but Louis took their concepts one step further by revising the role of drawing. Both Pollock, and Frankenthaler following his lead, drew in paint, thus synthesizing the two classical antipodes of art. But their drawing remained the record of a manual gesture. Louis removed the hand of the artist entirely in his pouring and spilling, and gained a greater degree of abstractness through impersonality. In the veils Louis arrived at a technical process—contingent

mainly on the way paint dried—by means of which the *detail of drawing* was still present without any evidence of manual gesture. This enabled him to preserve the function of drawing without separating it from color or creating conventionally contoured shapes.

The presence of detail created through a *mechanical* rather than a *manual* process was made possible by staining successive layers of paint into paint (probably while underneath layers were still wet). The result of this process was that paint dried irregularly, so that a smoky residue often appears to lie on the surface of the veils. These delicate smoky paint residues form patterns unlike drawn shapes in that they lack sharp linear contour. Nevertheless, soft edges bleeding into canvas or into painted surface create elegant detail by playing against each other, thus subsuming the *function* of drawing.

III. The Washington Context

While Louis was painting his first series of veils in 1954, Davis and Mehring were still imitating Gorky. But Davis was also looking at Klee and Dubuffet, whose work he had seen in exhibitions at the Kootz Gallery in New York. Noland, too, was experimenting in several styles; and some early works were strongly influenced by Paul Klee.

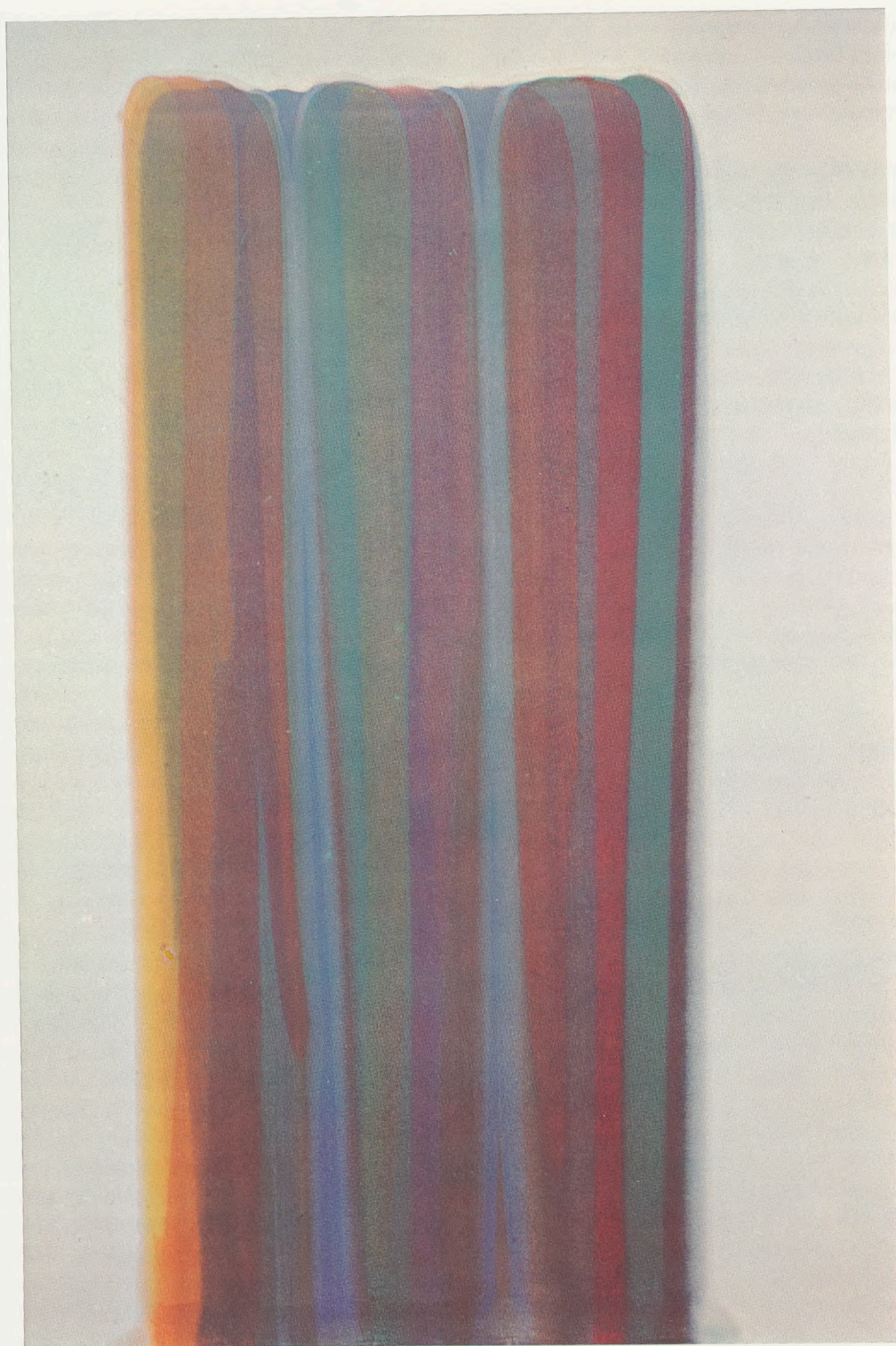
Noland was not the only Washington painter to look closely at Klee. Klee played the role in Washington that Kandinsky played in New York, which made for crucial differences in approach and emphasis. As opposed to Kandinsky's expressionist romanticism, Klee's experiments with surface and texture, his early use of banding, central images and geometric motifs, provided important precedents for the kind of technique and imagery eventually developed in Washington. Klee was accessible in Washington as Kandinsky was accessible in New York because of the taste of a local collector. As Solomon Guggenheim had assembled a great collection of Kandinsky's works in his New York museum, so Duncan Phillips put together a remarkable collection of Klee's works. No one who has ever lived in Washington (this writer included) can ever forget the impact of the Klee room at the Phillips Gallery. There are paintings in that room such as *Arab Song*, a whimsical figure painted directly into burlap, as Washington painters would later stain their images

directly into raw canvas. In *Arab Song* Klee emphasizes the coarse weave and texture of the burlap ground as a piece of cloth as they would call attention to the identity of the canvas as fabric. Klee's subtle unusual color sequences often included muted pastels and a range far beyond that of the colors of the spectrum used by Kandinsky in his expressionist works.

Klee was not the only important painter Washington artists could see in depth at the Phillips Gallery. Because of Duncan Phillips' taste for Impressionist and Impressionist derived paintings, the Phillips Collection is strong in examples of color art. Consequently the memories of Washington artists were impressed with the light-filled images of a colorist like Bonnard, and of painters like the neo-Impressionist Monticelli, whose uniform surfaces of identical *machiaioli* were an early example of the all-over distribution of stippled color in terms, however, of a figurative style. (Monticelli could also be seen at the Corcoran, which had a room full of his works on exhibit in the fifties.)

Also on view at the Phillips Gallery were the unique canvases of the relatively unknown American Augustus Vincent Tack, a friend of Duncan Phillips who was a member of the original 1920 board of directors of the gallery. During the forties Tack lived in Washington painting official portraits of government figures. But earlier he had painted some remarkable abstract murals, whose fluid nature images bear an uncanny even if coincidental resemblance to Clyfford Still's jagged imagery. With their matte surfaces and close-valued dark tones of blue, brown and green, Tack's abstractions have a certain relationship—again perhaps merely coincidental—with Noland's juxtapositions of close-valued dark colors, and even perhaps with the smoky palette and cosmic imagery of Louis' veils.

It is also worth remarking that the Phillips Gallery is particularly rich in watercolors by the Americans Dove and Marin whose works may have helped to develop the taste for thin transparent paint and the watercolor-like technique of staining adopted by the Washington painters. Thus in constructing the context of the Washington School, one must count the Phillips Collection as the other decisive factor, along with Greenberg's influence, in orienting Washington painters toward color painting and away from any Cubist derived style. Possibly the Washington School developed as other provincial schools did not because Greenberg was there often over a period of years, rather than just to give a lecture, and because the Phillips Gallery, like the Museum of Modern Art in New York, provided examples of a tradition artists could study. That the Modern is predominantly a collection of classical Cubist and Constructivist painting, whereas the Phillips is rich in color painting, decorative works and the painting of Paul Klee must be taken into consideration in any historical study of the Washington School.



IV. Beyond Abstract Expressionism

Throughout the fifties activity increased in Washington. The crucial year, however, was 1958. In that year Morris Louis painted his second series of veils which married color with structure even more cohesively than in his initial veils. Noland executed his first concentric ring "bullseye" paintings. Davis made his first stripe paintings; and Mehring began working in a sensuous all-over manner covering the canvas with a fragile overlay of delicate cursive swirls. Despite the amount of activity and the quality of work produced, however, it must be remembered that even in 1958 the Washington painters, unlike New York artists forced by market pressures to develop a trademark image, were still working in several manners simultaneously. For example, although there is a 1958 centered image bullseye painting by Noland in the Melzac Collection, Noland showed all-over lyrical abstractions, heavily indebted to Pollock, in both his 1957 and 1958 New York exhibitions at the Tibor de Nagy gallery. Obviously Noland, like the others, was still casting about for a way out of Abstract Expressionism in 1958. For the next year or so he concentrated on the centered motifs presaged by the Melzac bullseyes but these continued to be encircled with irregular aureoles of splattered paint reminiscent of gestural abstraction.

Distance from the New York art market gave Washington painters freedom and the time to develop gradually while experimenting with new techniques and images that did not necessarily have to be saleable. But despite the physical remove of Washington artists from the New York scene, the psychological pull of action painting—the modish vanguard style throughout the fifties—remained strong. Not surprisingly, all experimented with forms of gestural abstraction. For the most part, these efforts are not memorable, with the possible exception of a few canvases painted in the mid-fifties by Gene Davis in imitation of Kline's bold structuring of the paths of gesture. In these works, which mark his first use of banding, Davis regularized Kline's brushstrokes lining them up parallel to the framing edge to reiterate, as did Newman's stripes, the vertical support.

Louis' action paintings, now mostly destroyed, were executed between the first and second series of veils, that is, between 1955 and 1957. In these works, Louis apparently regressed to a pictorial illusionism based on color contrast reminiscent of Hofmann's "push-pull" principle of the optical illusion involving the advancement and recession of color planes. Abandoning the stain technique for the moment, presumably in pursuit of greater color intensity, Louis failed to reconcile color with flatness in a convincing manner. In these works, planes of color laid over one another—as the veils had been superimposed—created a series of receding planes because of their opacity at odds with

Louis' desire to transcend Cubist illusionism.

Louis was mercilessly critical of his own work and destroyed most of these paintings. Two of the few examples still extant are an untitled abstraction of 1956 in the Melzac Collection and another work of the same year in the Detroit Art Institute. These painterly works appear to be experiments in gaining luminosity through color saturation as an alternative to the muted receding tones of the veils. Louis was finally able to achieve the brilliance and purity of hue he desired in the "unfurls." He could do this however only by separating colors out from one another, contrasting them with the dazzling whiteness of the raw canvas, which made them appear that much brighter. The relative transparency of the veils on the other hand created a very different kind of illusion. This illusion was related to the use of light in the "unfurls" in that it gave the impression of a light source within the canvas, that is, of light coming from behind and filtering through the image. This use of light links Louis with the whole tradition of luminist landscape painting from Claude Lorraine to Turner, in which a light source within the painting floods the foreground. Indeed the very structure of the unfurls, with their diagonal rivulets of color framing an open center recalls the structure of Claude's classical landscapes in which architectural monuments frame a light-filled open center.

It was Noland who first realized that opaque, fully saturated colors had to be separated from one another so as not to create Cubist overlapping. Possibly Louis' unfurls which overlap are not as successful as those which do not simply because they are not as uncompromising in this respect. With the stain technique Noland was able to create an entirely different spatial experience from that of Albers, although he continued to utilize Albers' principle of the interaction of adjacent colors. But Albers' space, like Hofmann's color space, remained essentially Cubist because it depended on the advancement and recession of planes from the surface. Although Noland creates space through optical color contrast, his space never recalls Cubism because the technique of staining visibly uniting figure with ground frees him from the illusion of receding and advancing planes.

Louis was the first Washington painter to evolve as a mature artist. If he does not eventually emerge as the greatest painter of the fifties, which is how he appears to me today, he is indisputably among the major painters of the decade. That his radically original paintings were executed in Washington was not without importance for other artists developing there. By 1958 Louis' style and imagery had crystallized. This was not true of the younger painters working in Washington. What Louis was doing seemed so removed from the concerns of the younger Washington artists that it seemed he was playing an entirely different game. Louis' veils were, as we have pointed out, extremely powerful and original images. Indeed they were, like

Johns' targets and Pollock's webs, uniquely loaded and comprehensive images. I would suggest that one reason they are superior to anything else done in Washington was their lyric nature imagery, which identifies Louis with first generation Abstract Expressionism rather than with later developments in American painting.

For many reasons, the veils represent the pinnacle of Louis' career. With the veils and to some extent the unfurls rests Louis' claim to originality as a colorist. Examining the color of the later stripe paintings we find it is dominated by the conventional primary and secondary colors and variations of them. The greyed twilight pastels of the early veils and the bronzed autumnal tones of the later veils are, however, another matter. Here the technique of pouring color into color enabled Louis to create an unusual optical mixture *within* the canvas itself through subsequent pourings. As a result of this process, bright residues of earlier stainings seep around and through the smoky transparent surface "veils."

As long as Louis continued working this way, his color was original. As soon as he began following Noland's example and setting colors adjacent to one another, however, he lost a lot of his originality as a colorist. In the unfurls, the image of a vast expanse of reserved canvas flanked by curtains of brilliant color was sufficiently dramatic to carry the paintings. When Louis moved on to the stripes, however, he became involved in a neutral image lacking inherent drama. Without the interest created through highly charged imagery, the stripes in themselves must rely exclusively on the power of Louis' color to engage and arrest. Often his color is simply not unusual or surprising enough in these late works to carry the full burden of pictorial expression placed on them. Thus the most exciting of Louis' stripes are usually the most irregular in structure and asymmetrical in placement because they are not entirely static images.

Lacking dramatic imagery, Louis' stripes in themselves do not snap with the same electric urgency as Noland's later horizontal stripes, nor do they create the same spatial tension. There is a relative flatness to the space in Louis' stripe paintings in sharp distinction to the mysteriously ambiguous space of the veils, or even the florals, which are inferior versions of the veils.

Imagery was crucial to the expressive content of Louis' work, but technique permitted his final breakthrough. Louis worked as Pollock and Frankenthaler worked; that is, on a canvas roll that was cropped and stretched after the painting was finished. Louis' cropping, however, was quite different from Pollock's and even from Frankenthaler's. Pollock cut the canvas close to the image, obviously with the dimensions of the stretcher in mind as he painted, perhaps the reason his drip paintings are closer to the easel painting tradition and to analytic Cubist con-

cerns than are the paintings of Frankenthaler, Louis and the color painters who followed them.³ Frankenthaler was willing to allow her images to break the frame, and "cropped" as Degas had cropped his images, in imitation of the camera eye. Louis, on the other hand, placed his images in the center of areas of unpainted canvas, taking full advantage of the ability of the bare canvas to suggest limitless space. However, except in his very last stripes, which float freely in space, Louis anchors his images to at least one edge of the canvas, usually the bottom, emphasizing a sense of gravity in the directional flow of paint.

Noland's paintings, as well, owe many of their striking features to the way he made them. The circular image must have originated in some part from the act of walking around his works. Because one understands he marked the center by reaching with his arms from the periphery, these works have an implicit sense of human scale Noland loses in his later banded paintings. Stretching after the fact had other advantages too. In the chevron paintings that superseded the circular motifs, Noland was able to orient the image with regard to the frame by stretching the diagonal chevrons to bisect the corners, calling attention to the angle formed by the bars of the support.

Another difference in the effect of paintings done off as opposed to on the stretcher is the kind of surface tension created. In stain painting surface tension is not necessarily bought at the price of a hard resistant surface limiting illusionism to a literal minimum. On the contrary, the emphasis on the softness of the cloth and transparency of paint creates a surface which appears to open itself to visual penetration, rather than to close itself off in a literalist definition of flatness. This is an important distinction between Washington color painting and the colorist works of Kelly, Stella, Youngerman, Bannard, etc. who work on pre-stretched canvases.

V. Louis and Noland

In 1960 Clement Greenberg published the article "Louis and Noland" which was the first indication that something significant was happening in Washington. But this article, which established the reputations of Louis and Noland internationally, took their work completely out of the context of the Washington School or any historical development. Louis' action paintings and figurative works by Noland such as *Job*, a small *tacheiste* male nude in the Melzac Collection, reveal that neither had a development as

smooth or an entry as instantaneous as Greenberg's essay implies. When we see their work in its actual context of the Washington School, it does not appear any less original when compared with New York work, but it certainly becomes more understandable. For Louis and Noland were not isolated cases, even if they were the leading figures in the Washington School. There are, moreover, certain questions which have never been satisfactorily dealt with in the literature, which remains a literature created by Greenberg and critics heavily in his debt. The most crucial of these questions is the nature of the relationships among the various painters in Washington as they developed. Because so few painters were involved, these contacts even if brief were vital.⁴

There are, for example, a number of reciprocal exchanges between Louis and Noland; and it is doubtful either would have evolved in the same manner independently. For a few weeks after their visit to Frankenthaler's studio in 1953, they painted together, sometimes on the same canvas, and experimented with new techniques.

Twelve years younger than Louis, Noland was understandably influenced by the older man's more mature works. Noland came later than Louis to staining and to a structure based on image-frame relationship. Noland's so-called "tip" or "pinwheel" paintings of 1959 appear directly related to Louis' unfurls, both in the way they are painted, i.e., through pouring, and in their spreading flame-like image. In a sense they appear the reverse of the unfurls; whereas Louis leaves the center bare, framing it with banks of color flowing outward to the canvas edge, Noland centers the image, leaving the periphery bare. Noland's chevrons also recall Louis' unfurls in the manner they are stretched to acknowledge the framing edge by being anchored to its corners. Similarly Noland's adoption of the stripe motif beginning in 1968 recalls Louis' earlier use of such a motif.

Having followed Louis' example in adopting the stain technique as a means for creating a special class of color illusions compatible with flatness, the major question for Washington artists was how to find an adequate way to structure a pictorial statement. All-over painting was not really suitable to an intense color experience, which may be one reason Pollock never developed as a color painter. All-over painting involving stippling or calligraphy of the kind Noland, Mehring and Downing were doing could not yield as direct and intense a color experience as, for example, Newman's large fields of a single color, because the all-over inevitably involves optical mixture, not optical purity. Alone among Washington painters, Louis found a way of circumventing this problem.

In comparison with the wholeness and singleness of image Louis was able to create in the veils, the other Washington painters appeared to be still embroidering the surface with their

drawing, dots, patches and calligraphic patterns. Arriving at a structure capable of presenting color in the most direct and unencumbered way possible was not easy, if Cubist shapes were to be avoided. Pollock's and Louis' respective techniques of dripping and pouring precluded the creation of conventional figure-ground discontinuities. The simplest solution, and the one everyone in Washington outside of Louis took initially, was to find some variation of Pollock's all-overness. But the atomization of color and its consequent diminution in intensity gave rise to other problems. The all-over style carried to a literalist extreme can only produce wallpaper, not art. Without the surface variations employed by Pollock in the drip paintings (varied consistency, thick pigment, reflective paint, foreign materials), the all-over style has a hard time distinguishing itself as painting from repeated design motifs. Louis' veils were sufficiently irregular, and in the best sufficiently explicit in their awareness of the framing edge to establish themselves as paintings. But Mehring, Downing and Davis all had problems differentiating their paintings from design. Consequently they were forced to search for structuring devices that would establish the identity of their paintings as paintings.

Davis arrived at a means of structuring color pictorially by varying the intervals between his stripes, grouping them together into bundled shafts of related colors. Mehring began cutting up his all-over paintings into broad strips which he pasted into various geometric configurations in which flatness was insured despite high color contrast and the use of shapes by means of the collage technique. In their search for structure they had some precedents. Newman and Rothko provided examples of color painting in highly structured formats. These, however, were neither centralized or symmetrical like the heraldic emblematic structures that came to be preferred in the sixties.

There was however an important source for such symmetrical, centered imagery in currency in the late fifties. Painted in 1955, Jasper Johns' targets were exhibited in 1957 at the Jewish Museum and in his first one-man show at the Castelli gallery in 1958. It is doubtful if anyone in Washington saw these shows, although like painters all over America, Washington artists took notice of the target by Johns which appeared on the cover of *Art News* in January, 1958. That cover had as profound an effect on artistic thinking in Washington as it did everywhere it was seen. The radicality of Johns' preconceived image, especially in the context of action painting improvisation, was that it provided an avenue of escape from the looseness and lack of structure that led to the demise of Abstract Expressionism. Although Johns remained a painterly painter, other artists, inspired by his example of a preconceived emblematic structure, rejected the painterliness of Abstract Expressionism in favor of the style Greenberg has called "post-painterly abstraction."⁵



Greenberg's implicit claim that post-painterly abstraction is the style of advanced art in the sixties is justifiable on the basis that it is a more complex synthesis—one which includes the lessons of Pollock—than other styles of color painting. "Op art," for example, continues to depend on Cubist figure-ground relationships already superseded by Pollock. Similarly, color painting that leans exclusively on Matisse's late cut-outs without incorporating the lessons of the mature Monet regarding a dispersal of pictorial focus and a virtual obliteration of edge as drawing through an atomization of color, is not as advanced as painting that takes Monet and Pollock into consideration.

Judging by such criteria, the work done in Washington while New York artists blindly imitated de Kooning, formed the basis for the post-Cubist abstraction of the sixties. Washington must be regarded as the initial stage of the explosion of color painting that characterizes American painting of the last decade. If historical importance could confer quality, then on this basis alone, the works produced in Washington are among the most durable paintings of the post-War period.

VI. Color and Structure

Noland's emergence as a structural painter antedated that of the other Washington painters with the possible exception of Davis, although as we have seen, Louis prepared the way for Noland through his concern with image-frame relationships in certain of his 1954 veils. If at first Noland followed Louis, by the time Louis died in 1962, Noland had clearly emerged as the strongest personality in the Washington School. His own development, away from all-over painterly painting toward highly structured conceptual images with opaque color, firm edges and no detail was decisive for everyone in Washington, including Louis. From the moment Noland began painting his concentric ring bullseye paintings—his first conceptually structured works—he initiated the process of expunging painterly detail and surface variation through modulation which he completed by the end of 1961. A comparison of works done in the beginning of 1961 with paintings exhibited in 1962 at the Andre Emmerich Gallery illustrates this progressive elimination of any painterly detail or surface modulation that might distract from the purity of color.

Given his unique sensibility, Noland's evolution as a conceptual structuralist was inevitable. In a filmed interview Noland speaks of the importance of creating "one-shot" painting; that is, painting perceived in a single moment of time. He has said that for him, the importance of seeing Frankenthaler's *Mountains and Sea* was that it gave him the first indication of how to go about making such paintings. Undoubtedly he realized that the stain technique permitted the creation of images communicated instantaneously because of the uniform texture and inseparability of surface and image. For the consistent texture of paint and surface, the fact that the two are no longer two but one, impresses the eye with the wholeness of the image in a manner that conventional technique, with its layers of successive repainting and revision, cannot.

Determined to create painting perceptible at a single glance, Noland was prepared to make any sacrifices necessary to achieve that goal. His development as an impact painter had a decisive effect on the whole of the Washington School. To create the most powerful impact he was willing to jettison anything that interfered with the instantaneous communication of the image. This included the elimination of any kind of detail or internal inflection within the work, even such minor surface variations as those created through transparency. Noland's adoption of a more impersonal technique demanded a relatively opaque pigment with no variation in saturation. Opacity had advantages for Noland it had for no one else in Washington. Centering, too, was vital for Noland in achieving immediacy of impact. A strictly symmetrical centered image can be perceived more quickly than any other kind, because the focus of the eye on any part of the image immediately communicates the whole image, which bears identical relationship to field and frame from top to bottom, left and right.

Noland's elimination of painterly detail was related to his conversion to strictly symmetrical images. Both had the same goal: immediacy of impact. The question of symmetry with regard to central image painting is crucial. Louis did not use actual bilateral symmetry in his veils; the 1958 veils are similar, but not identical from side to side. Louis' conception of symmetry seems to have been derived from Pollock's drip paintings, which although in no way symmetrical, create an all-over texture so homogeneous as to suggest symmetry. Like Pollock's drip paintings, Louis' veils and unfurls are similar in all-over texture and general patterning from side to side, but the two halves of the painting are clearly not identical. When Noland began centering his images, he took a more radical approach to symmetry. Beginning with the earliest bullseye motifs of 1958, such as the example in the Melzac Collection, *Rest*, Noland created an image that was symmetrical not only left to right, but top to bottom as well. Symmetrical structure enhanced the emblematic

unity of his paintings. Emblematic clarity served as another means to exclude the possibility of "reading" the image in time as a sequence of related parts rather than at a single glance.

In this connection the 1959 painting, *Split*, is particularly interesting because it is one of the few irregular images Noland painted after he began centering his motifs. In *Split*, the square in the middle is somewhat off center, which creates a kind of pictorial drama and excitement Noland finally sacrificed in the cause of the greater excitement of immediacy of impact.

In *Split* Noland exhibits his astonishing inventiveness as a colorist, combining a salmon rose with lavender, black, white and ultramarine and utilizing the off-white of the raw canvas as an additional color. *Split* is a painting in which both color and image have equal drama. In later works, Noland sought more banal images to give greater weight to the primacy of color. To emphasize color he eliminated the drama, literal movement and irregularity of image that makes *Split* such an exciting painting. As we have observed, these sacrifices were necessary for the creation of "one-shot" paintings. Detail and modulation or surface inflection bring the eye to rest, requiring subsequent moments in time to be interpreted. Without such interruptions, however, the single image is communicated as an instantaneous integral *gestalt*, which Noland found desirable.

By the mid-sixties, everyone in Washington would be converted to structured conceptual painting, firm edges and opaque pigment. There are many reasons to argue that what might have been a victory for Noland personally was not such a happy affair for the others involved, whose transparent or all-over works remain their finest efforts. Carried away by Noland's drive toward purity of color and immediacy of impact, other Washington painters, Louis included, may have lost more than they gained. For example, Davis' pencil thin stripes washed over with delicate color are complex, fragile and evocative works. In his later stripe paintings Davis abandons transparency, drawing, and the sense of openness created by leaving areas of raw canvas with, I think, a substantial loss to his work. But in his early stripe paintings, and in his colored grids, which also utilize drawing to advantage, Davis created outstandingly original paintings, which stand comparison with the best work done around 1960.

Davis was the first artist in Washington to use the stripe motif, which he adapted from Newman. But this fact is essentially meaningless since the mere use of the stripe does not constitute any pictorial invention. Davis' sources were the same as those of Stella in New York (i.e., Abstract Expressionism, especially Kline, plus Johns), although at the time neither knew the work of the other, and each used the motif of the stripe in a different way. Davis was, however, the first to use many different colors in the same painting to create maximum interaction; and he was

also the first to insist on rhythmic interval as an essential structuring device. Noland's horizontal banded paintings of the late sixties resemble Davis' stripe paintings of 1960-61 as much or even more than they recall Louis' stripe paintings. There are of course many crucial differences both in intention and in effect, but the two groups of works are unmistakably related, representing a current echo of Noland's Washington period.

There is a crucial dissimilarity however between Noland's use of the stripe as opposed to that of Davis. Davis' vertical bands demand a reading in time because their grouping suggests a progression, whereas Noland's expansive horizontal bands pull the eye across the canvas in an uninterrupted flow of movement suggesting an exhilarating physical velocity. Because Noland's bands do not arrest the eye, halting its reading of the image, the whole is perceived instantaneously and at once. And it can be argued that immediacy of communication is the primary value of advanced painting.

By the same token, Mehring's all-over, nearly monochrome calligraphic paintings of 1958-60 inspired by Pollock, as well as his essays in Frankenthaler's looser style, are more impressive than his later hard edge works. When Downing and Mehring gave up all-overness in favor of structured images, they became perhaps more sophisticated painters, but at the expense of the lyrical personal quality of their all-over paintings. As in Davis' case, Downing's and Mehring's switch to opaque pigment and heraldic images meant a sacrifice of certain spatial qualities that distinguish their early work. In Mehring's case, the adoption of static frontal motifs meant the sacrifice of the flowing movement that characterized his early lyrical works. In Downing's case, simplification of his dot patterns into larger discs, presumably in order to create a more intense color experience, reduces the activity within the painting by reducing the number and rate of interactions between colors.

Thus the early work of Davis, Downing and Mehring is paradoxically more interesting than their later works. They followed Noland in adopting static frontal motifs and opaque color. Noland's drive toward purity of color led him to use larger areas of color; and they unfortunately followed him. For Noland the sacrifice of explicit movement within a work did not mean the sacrifice of kinetic energy. Noland is such an intensely physical painter that even in his most static and hieratic images, such as the bullseyes and bands, there is a sense of expansive energy, of the image pulsating laterally and pushing against the framing edge. This sense of energy contained and channeled generates the tremendous excitement in a painting by Noland. This physical energy seems a peculiar characteristic of his own sensibility which allowed him to work at times within severely reductive means and images, without producing dull or static work.

An illustration of Noland's ability to create movement with the simplest means is a further comparison of the way he uses the stripe, as opposed to the way in which Davis and Louis used it. In Davis' vertical stripe paintings, the image is contained by the framing bars at each side; these stop the pattern from appearing to ripple beyond the confines of the canvas. Noland's stripes work more like Pollock's drip paintings, in that they suggest a continuation of the image beyond the literal confines of the canvas. They resist focusing in much the same manner that Pollock's large dripped webs resist it by keeping the eye moving in an endless search for a point of rest. They also recall the horizontal structure of landscape painting. The particular liveness and electricity of Noland's banded paintings arises from his refusal to define framing edge as limit and his practice of painting the long uninterrupted trajectories of his bands uniformly to the support edge, another device for fusing the image with the frame.

We have seen that the use of similar formats and techniques and the search for solutions to common formal problems unites the artists who worked in Washington, whose relationships are more complex and interwoven than one might suspect from the meager literature on the subject. Mehring and Downing, for example, shared a studio from 1955 to 1957. In 1959 they opened the Origo Gallery on P Street in Washington where they showed their own works as well as those of other painters. Initially Mehring was the more sophisticated artist. His early works were technically proficient studies in the styles of several modern masters. Because Mehring was Noland's student at Catholic University, it is assumed he followed Noland in adopting an all-over manner. Certainly contact with Noland must have been valuable to Mehring, but he appears to have arrived at an all-over manner perhaps as early as Noland himself through his own study of Pollock.

The relationship of center to frame, of raw canvas to painted canvas, became a crucial formal problem for all the artists working in Washington, and each resolved it in his own way. Some of Mehring's most interesting works are a series of small paintings with circular reserved centers surrounded by all-over stippling. Unfortunately these remain sketches, ideas never developed on a large scale. The treatment of reserved areas of raw canvas as negative images in relationship to painted areas was developed by Louis in his unfurls, which in a certain respect appear as negative images of the immediately preceding veils. In a series of small and finally large stripe paintings begun in 1959, Davis experimented with reserved centers. Thus we see Mehring and Davis attacking a formal problem Louis was working on at the same time—or conceivably even slightly earlier—than Louis himself: the dilemma of how to separate color from color with reserved areas of raw canvas to achieve greater brilliance.

This situation, in which a number of artists working in related styles pursues the solution to related formal problems, is typical of the later history of abstract art, whose sources have become more and more available as the century progresses. In this respect Washington may serve as an example of the current situation of abstract art, a situation defined by the shared knowledge of similar sources. As modernist abstraction defines itself with increasing precision, reaching in its maturity for an explicit definition of its limitations, it may be said that the history of painting will not conform to past models of serial innovation. Rather, there is every possibility that after Jackson Pollock, or at any rate after Morris Louis' extraordinary synthesis of the disparate elements of pictorial form, abstract art is a mature style in which no further fundamental changes can take place. In this event, innovation is a matter of inflection and variation, not of redefinition. For once instant communication makes sources available to many at once, the viable alternatives present themselves simultaneously to a group of artists rather than to a single individual. As in simultaneous discoveries in science, it becomes inevitable that more than one individual is capable of arriving at a satisfactory solution given the available data.

Since the limits of abstraction were charted by artists like Malevich, Duchamp, Reinhardt and especially Pollock, its frontiers have become known parameters. If this is the case, abstract art can no longer be considered a linear progression, but must be seen as a lateral extension—a variety of related solutions to ongoing art problems, such as the problem of the relationship of color and illusion to flatness and design explored by the Washington painters we have been studying. Singling out innovation as the primary basis for quality encourages the kind of color and desperate attempts to innovate we now witness. Louis' veils are great not because they are so radically innovative, but because they are so radically synthetic and condensed. The identification of innovation with quality originates in an early critical assumption that the archaic work in a sequence is the freshest and the strongest. Critics make such equations because it is difficult to support obviously subjective judgments without some verifiable claim to objective fact and an identification of innovation with quality is presumably an objective observation.

It is not necessary to place an artist outside of history or to suppress certain aspects of his development that were less than masterful to validate his art. The only test of quality is durability; and durability is a test beyond the taste of any individual critic. More than a decade has passed since many of the works in the Melzac Collection were painted, but they look fresher today than the *dernier cri* of latter-day New York color painters, only just beginning to learn the lessons from Monet, Matisse, Newman, Pollock and Frankenthaler observed long ago in Washington.

VII. Postscript

I have called these notes retrospective because the Washington Color School no longer exists. Noland left Washington in 1961, and Louis died in 1962. Today Downing lives in New York, and although both Davis and Mehring still live in Washington, they show as often in New York. There is a Washington School, but it is not, except in the case of Sam Gilliam, Eric Rudd, Alma Thomas, Ken Young, mainly a color school. Yet the debt of younger artists like Gilliam, whose dyed and stained canvases recall Louis' technique, and Rockne Krebs, whose early plexi-glass sculpture adapted its image from Noland's chevrons, is large. Great art was made in Washington, and there is a sense Washington is a place great art can be made again. The ambition of artists like Gilliam and Krebs is a measure of the achievement of their predecessors.

Although I have discussed only the painting made in Washington, another essay needs to be written on the strong three-dimensional work being produced by Washington artists like Anne Truitt, V. V. Rankine, Enid Sanford Cafritz, and Colin Greenly. A gifted painter whose works need to be seen in the context of the Washington Color School is the late Mary Myer, who also researched many of the problems discussed in this essay.

In retrospect, work done by the circle of Washington color painters between 1958 and 1962 holds up with the best painting done anywhere during that period. Whatever the future of the Washington School, history will remember Washington and the brief but brilliant flowering of high painting that took place in a protected oasis away from the pressure of New York fashion.

Barbara Rose
Madison, Connecticut

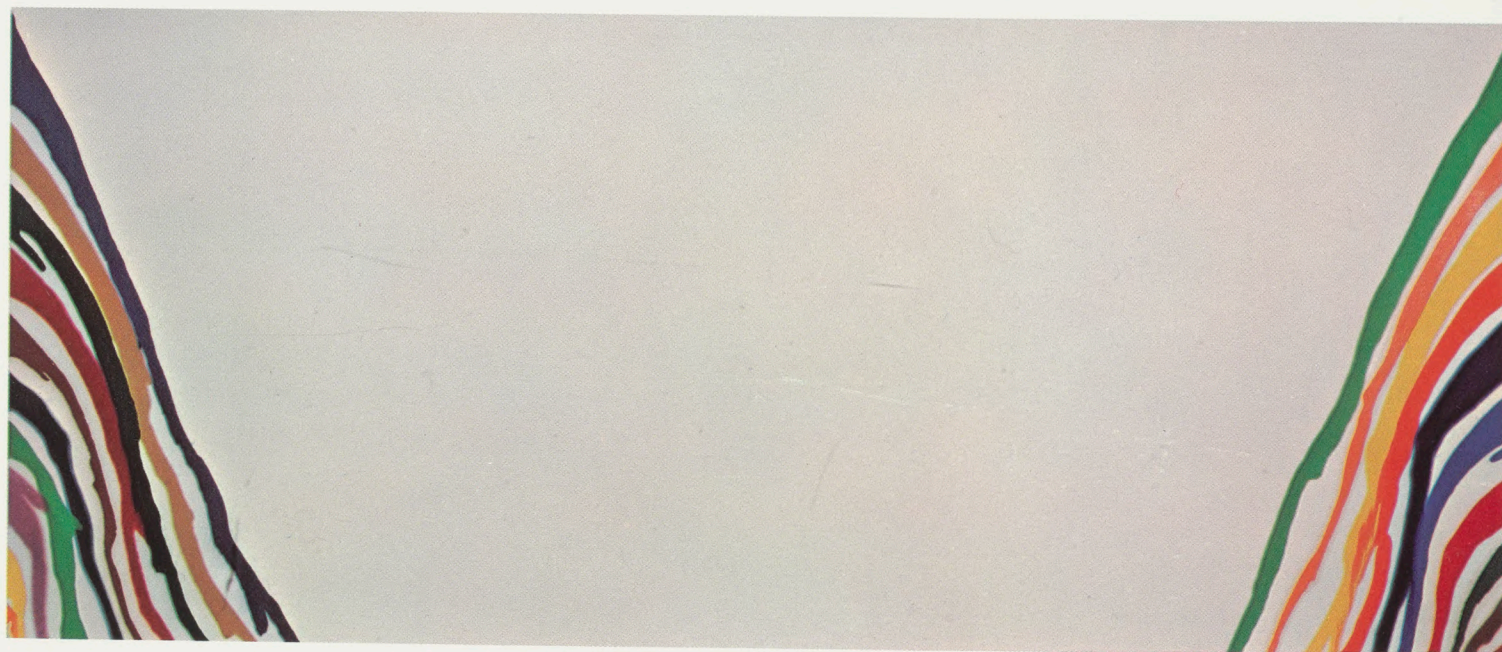
NOTES

1. There is no way of knowing how large the debt of Washington painters was to Greenberg. He apparently corresponded with several, making unofficial criticism of work in progress. According to Gene Davis, the reason he did not show his stripe paintings at the time they were painted is because Greenberg advised him not to do so.
2. See Michael Fried's discussion of Louis' technique in *Morris Louis*, Harry N. Abrams, 1971.
3. See William Rubin, "Jackson Pollock and the Modern Tradition," part iii, *Artforum*, April, 1967.
4. In an attempt to reconstruct the fifties in Washington, I interviewed several painters, dealers, and collectors on the scene at the time. Part of the interview I did with Gene Davis was published in the March, 1971 issue of *Artforum*. Further correspondence on the

subject of relationships among Washington painters appear in the subsequent two issues of *Artforum*. A letter from Mrs. Jacob Kainen clarified the situation further. She states that Davis studied with Jacob Kainen in the early fifties, and that he was also in contact with Washington artists Summerford and Gates. Kainen, a figurative color painter, was an influential teacher in Washington, who had lived and worked in advanced art circles in New York. In 1952, Noland, who was then arranging exhibitions at Catholic University, gave Kainen a retrospective. In the early fifties, Kainen taught at the Washington Workshop and was responsible for Louis' joining the school as an instructor.

5. See Clement Greenberg, "After Abstract Expressionism," *Art International*, VI, no. 8 (October 25, 1962) and "Post Painterly Abstraction," *Art International*, VIII, nos. 5-6 (Summer, 1964).

NOTES ON THE WASHINGTON
COLOR PAINTERS



78. LOUIS, Beta Upsilon, 1960

MORRIS LOUIS

In the 1940's and early 50's Morris Louis was painting abstract expressionist works with a Cubist infrastructure based on variations in value. Contact with the work of Helen Frankenthaler in 1953 influenced him to change his orientation from value to hue. He had been interested in Jackson Pollock's 1947-50 paintings in which armatures of dark and light were omitted for an emphasis on opticality; and in Pollock's 1951 works in which black Duco enamel was soaked into unprepared canvas. Frankenthaler's 1952 painting *Mountains and Sea* showed Louis how to combine these facets of Pollock's work for an expression of opticality with soaked or stained-in color.

Louis turned the staining of color into a new method of developing figuration. He poured plastic-based Magna paint (a new technical innovation in pigment developed by Leonard Bocour) onto unstretched, unprimed cotton duck, tilting and folding as he worked, to, in some measure, control the flow. The liquidity of the new acrylic paint enabled him to imitate the effect of water color on canvas. The layers of Magna placed one on top of the other actually bound together chemically and literally dyed the fabric. Louis was able to exploit this and create visually continuous shapes from successive layers of paint.

Change in color along the edge was the only indication of change in figuration in these 1954 and 1958-60 "veil" paintings. Tactile association was impossible; these paintings were purely optical—intelligible to the eye alone. In addition, because he poured these paintings, Louis' artistic decisions were not recorded gesturally. He subsequently abandoned the continuous configurations of the "veils" but his works still did not appear drawn since he increased the intensity of his acrylic color.

Space in his subsequent series, the Florals (1960), Unfurleds (1961) and Stripes (1962), seems incredibly open because Louis left a great quantity of the canvas bare. He utilized the raw canvas as color of equal standing with the stained canvas. In a radical move, just before his death in 1962, he directed his striped canvases to be stretched diagonally, thereby relating the stained and unstained areas to the shape of the picture support.

The paintings of Morris Louis synthesize the technical innovations of Pollock with the chromatic imaging of Newman, Still and Rothko. Louis' influence on the work of subsequent color painters has prompted many art historians to view his breakthrough as one in which "... painting itself broke through to its future."

KENNETH NOLAND

Kenneth Noland who, like his friend Louis, was greatly influenced by the works of Pollock and Frankenthaler in the early 50's, chose to explore the opticality and expressiveness of stained-in color while limiting himself in form to strict geometry. (This decision was probably influenced by his earlier training with geometric painter Josef Albers at Black Mountain College.) Noland, in his 1958 "targets" painted rings of concentric circles matching their centers to the exact center of the canvas support. He painted these, like Pollock, on the floor, from the center out, so that the target forms appeared to revolve. In addition, he left raw canvas on all four sides which gave his image the appearance of floating free.

In 1960 Noland gave color a greater structural role by painting his field. He placed an ellipsoid form either in or around the center of a fully saturated canvas. Variations in intensity of the same hue, or changes in hue retaining the same intensity were used to express spatial structure.

After the ellipsoids and targets, which had been related to their framing edge merely by their placement in the center of the canvas, Noland turned to the use of chevrons which could more clearly, by their V-shape be related to their picture support.

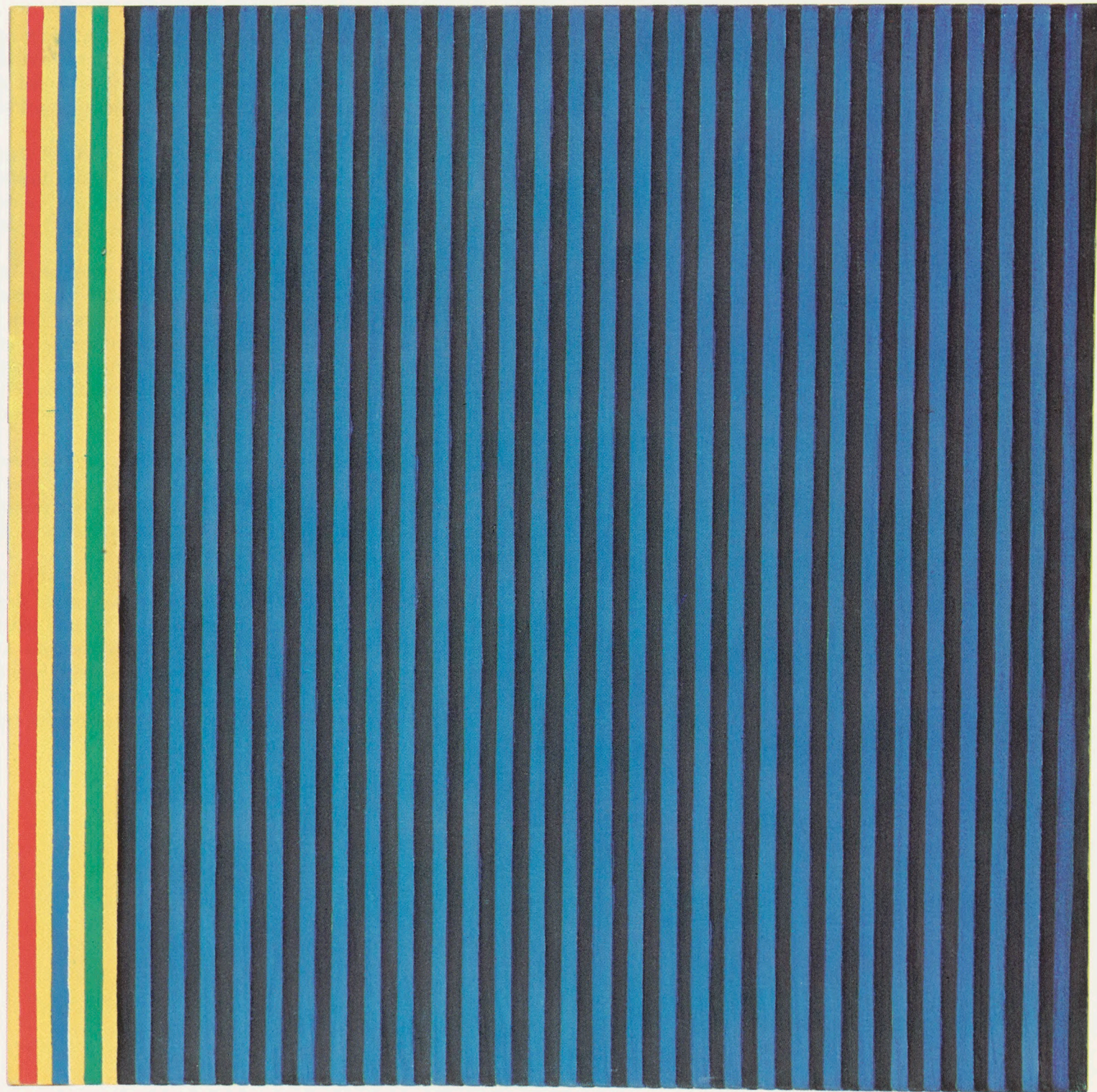
At first he anchored the chevrons to the mid-point of the bottom edge of a field of color. Subsequently he began to leave the field bare and to anchor not the bottom point, but the two upper tips of the chevrons to meet the exact upper corners of the canvas, making their relationship most explicit. The bottom tip no longer needed to touch the bottom canvas edge or even hang perpendicular to it. This created unstable pictorial situations and, after his departure from Washington in 1961, Noland began to shape his canvases to exploit this instability. He has recently moved on to horizontal bands and a greater emphasis on color of increasing subtlety.

In 1965 Noland and Louis' friend and advisor, critic Clement Greenberg, pointed out in an essay, "Modernist Painting," that an explicit acknowledgement of the literal character of a picture's support and the relation of the pictorial image to the shape of the support seemed to be emerging as a fundamental principle of the new avant-garde. Progress based on radical self-criticism was another characteristic noted by Greenberg in ambitious Modernist painting.

Noland's use of the principles and techniques of Modernism in his work and his understanding of their use in the work of his contemporaries greatly influenced other artists in Washington. His exploration of the expressive potential of geometric shapes sets the tone, and his presence on the scene has been acknowledged by many as the single greatest factor in transforming Washington from a "provincial back-water" to a major art center.



112. NOLAND, Sarah's Reach, 1964



26. DAVIS, Edge Stripes, 1962

GENE DAVIS

One of the most frequently used pictorial images in American abstract painting in the past decade has been the hard-edge stripe, and one of the most consistent painters of the stripe has been Washingtonian Gene Davis. Davis first used it as far back as 1953 and six years later limited himself solely to acrylic stripe paintings done with the aid of masking tape.

His use of stripes originated out of a misunderstanding of the works of Barnett Newman. Whereas Newman's stripes delineated spatial planes, Davis began to use the stripe format to provide what he termed a "matrix" for the play of color. The stripe allowed him to relate his structure to the shape of the canvas by a series of internalized repetitions of the framing edge.

From the start, Davis oriented his stripes vertically so as to avoid any literal associations with landscape and remain completely abstract. Rigid edge-to-edge stripes have allowed him free rein with color. He has avoided contrasts of dark and light and concentrated on contrasts of hue and, to some extent intensity, to carry the full burden of his expression. His completely intuitive approach, working directly and making decisions about color interval as he goes along, Davis derived from Jackson Pollock. He however has considerably refined Pollock's improvisation by bringing it to bear on color choice only.

Davis' works have been described as "motor-progressive" because experiencing his paintings involves a series of separate eye movements that follow one after the other. As in music, a time element is involved. Davis consistently has presented multiple points of interest in contrast to most contemporary painters who have tended to limit the number of relationships in their paintings.

Davis employed stripes of equal-width only in his paintings from 1961-1970. Recently, however, he has begun to paint works, more similar to his earliest stripes, in which varied widths and bands of bare canvas are combined in each painting with exquisitely complex color interaction for a Baroque, highly romantic look. Davis states that he has reached the point where he regards most other painter's solutions to the problem of how to put colors together as a compromise. "I can't see why," he has said, "given the stripe format, anyone would want to put colors together in any other way."

THOMAS DOWNING

Contact with the work and ideas of Kenneth Noland led Thomas Downing to switch, in 1959, from poured and dripped washes to color paintings of dots arranged first in all-over patterns, and then in grids, dials, and rings. Aureoles, contrasts of focus, and changes of color caused the dots to appear to rise up off the canvas and float free. By involving the space in front of the canvas Downing's surface gained in visual depth in accordance with his personal understanding of the history of pictorial space. He saw picture space as, from the time of the Renaissance on, gradually coming closer to the surface and finally off and around it. Downing began to feel that more explicit illusion could provide his work with another—third-dimension as it had in the Renaissance, only now this third-dimension would project instead of recede.

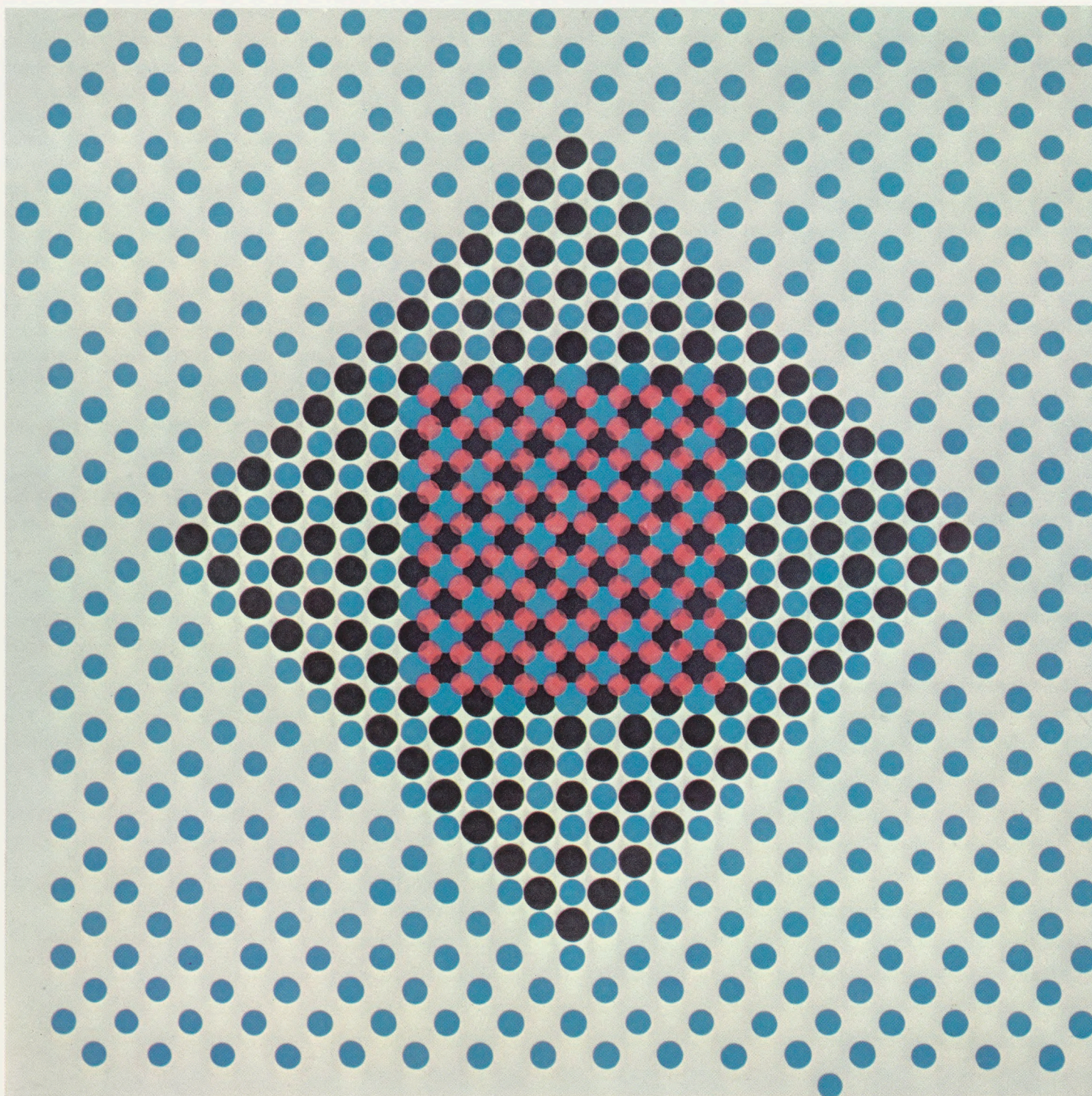
To effect this Downing turned to the use of the shaped canvas, in particular the parallelogram. An unresolved situation was created since the parallelogram, when hung horizontally, seemed to be moving diagonally upward, whereas the dot forms painted on it tilted out into the space in front. The bottom edge of the canvas appeared to move closer to the viewer than the top.

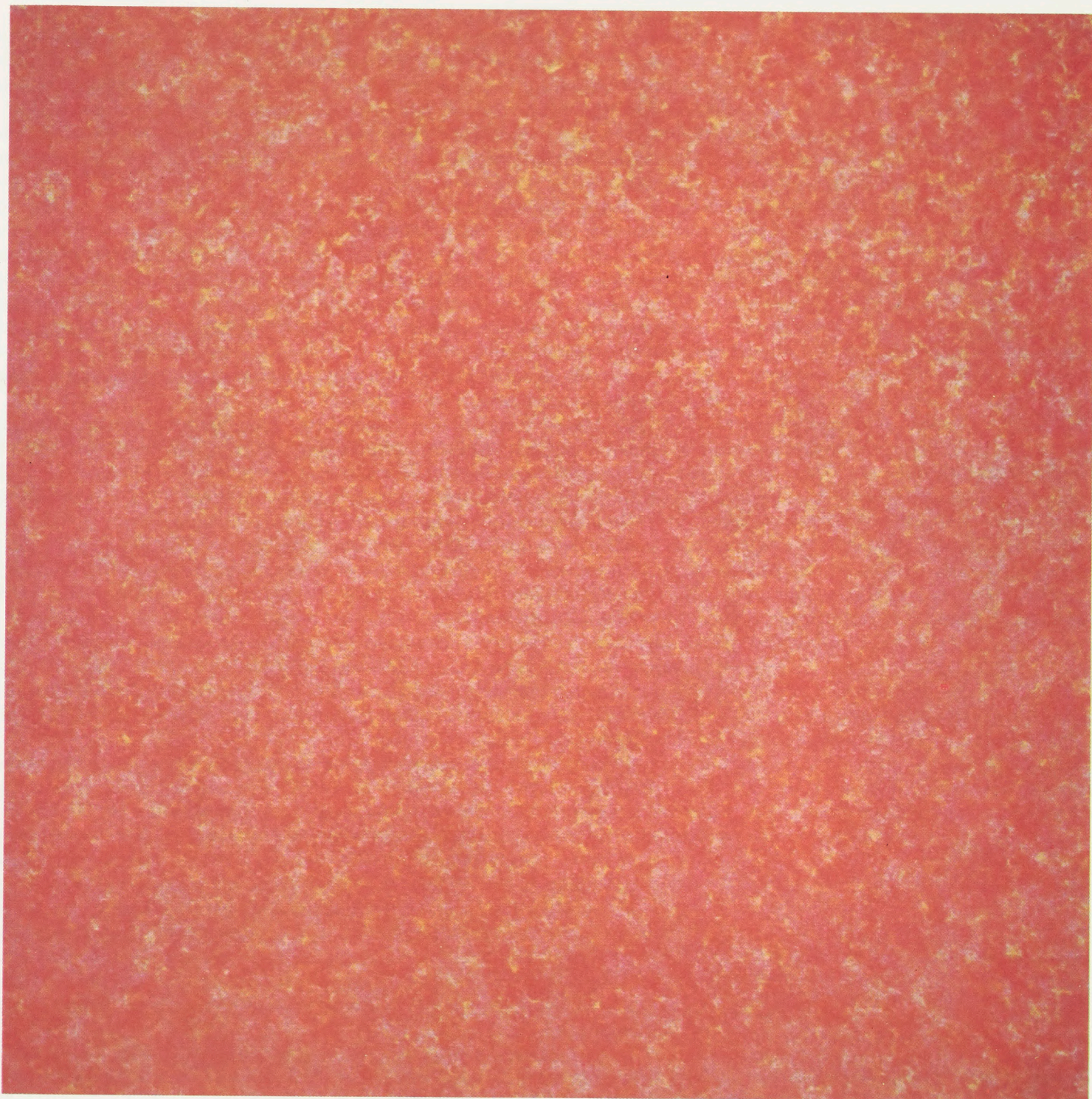
To further emphasize depth Downing replaced the dots with colored bands and attached two or three parallelograms together to form oblique angles. This extended the paintings in real space. He sometimes left bands of bare canvas, these bands giving the colored stripes the appearance of standing free. The two parallelogram paintings led to the more illusionistic *Planks* and the three parallelograms to the completely illusionistic *Folds*.

The *Planks* presented not only the optical illusion of projection but also a structured literal illusion of extension in space. When the *Planks* were first formed to give the illusion of unfolding from the wall, distortion resulted from Downing's use of a traditional vanishing point. Around this time he met the artist and writer I. Rice Pereira. Her feeling that a horizon line was relevant only to the earth-bound space of the Renaissance and therefore no longer sufficient in the twentieth century, led him to abandon vanishing point perspective for isometric projection. This enabled him to present space, without distortion, as an entity all its own, not stopping at the boundaries of the picture, but extending simultaneously into the wall and into the room.

Downing's concern for many years with spatial illusion can be seen as an extension of the exploration of opticality begun by Pollock and carried on by Frankenthaler, Louis and Noland, as well as an alternative to the possible dead-end of strictly minimal art and the outcome of his realization of the changed nature of modern man's perception and intuition of space.

Recently however he has changed his orientation from space back to color. He has returned to the exploration of the expressive potential inherent in color, using it in series in more sophisticated ring paintings or grids with a lateral extension.





91. MEHRING, Untitled, 1960

HOWARD MEHRING

Howard Mehning's first mature paintings, although similar in form to Jackson Pollock's 1947-50 works and Claude Monet's 1903-08 *Water Lilies* with their thin, loose handling, open rhythmic form, even lighting and avoidance of focus or hierarchy, were extremely felt, personal expressions of the lyric potential of color. In the manner of Pollock and Monet, as well as Louis and Noland, Mehning eliminated tactile sensations in these 1957-60 works in favor of an unremitting opticality.

He experimented at first with pouring in the manner of Louis and with looping skeins of paint as Pollock had done, but finally settled on spots of color as the best way in which to achieve an over-all sensation where the elements of his painting could be fused but remain separately active. By varying the sizes of the spots he produced a kinetic illusion of expansion and contraction. His surfaces appeared to breathe, discharging their muted colors into the air around them. Mehning produced a play between the second and third dimension by pushing the spots up to the foreground, parallel to the picture plane, while at the same time hinting strongly at depths existing beneath.

He painted these all-over works on the floor, with the canvas unstretched, to avoid as much as possible a sharp-edged look although he allowed some of the energy of the total field to concentrate at the perimeters. He stated in a letter in 1962: "I noticed in my over-all paintings . . . there was a tendency for the picture to heat up around the edge. There was a concentration of energy there, a pause before the eye moved out. [This] was important and exciting to me."

He decided to take advantage of these energy banks and to multiply their potential by inverting the edges of the canvas and repeating them inside the painting. He decided he wanted clean breaks between areas and, since he could not achieve this to his satisfaction through changes in color alone, he formulated patterns of squares-within-squares and back-to-back "L's," "T's" and "E's," pulling his paintings into "a series of contractions." He retained the spots and began to cut out and glue together stippled canvas shapes in different colors to form new compositions.

Mehning eventually began to feel that the stippling effect was getting in the way. Unequal densities among the spots tended to act as variations in value and this deprived his color of some of the purity and expressiveness he wished. In 1964, retaining the back-to-back compositions, he eliminated the stippling and the patchwork effect, leaving hard-edged color on a single canvas. Continuing to present an evenly dispersed all-over field, he merely reduced the number of pictorial elements.

Mehning saw these new, clear-cut paintings as parodies of their edge, an idea he derived from Barnett Newman's two inch wide one stripe "zip" paintings and he hoped his viewers would visualize the inversion process which formed them. He recently played havoc with this concept by bending the "L's" into asymmetrical "Z's" thereby achieving just as strong a sense of movement without the use of stippled color.

In the past several years many younger painters, bored with the minimal trend, have returned to a looser, more painterly handling in their work. As a result, there has been a reawakening of interest, in Washington and elsewhere, in Howard Mehning's earlier all-over paintings. A number of these 1957-60 works were shown for the first time to the public here and in New York in 1969-70.

PAUL REED

Paul Reed's professional background in graphic design has accounted for the more composed linear quality of his color paintings, setting him apart from his colleagues. In addition, unlike the other Washington painters, Reed does not paint directly but always works out his pictorial problems first in sketches, collages, and small sculptures. Concerns with shape and the creation of space, as well as the expressive capacity of pure color, can be traced throughout his work.

In his earliest acrylic color paintings Reed used curvilinear bean shapes which he touched and overlapped in different but equally simple, clear designs. A strong play resulted from the juxtaposition of the curving edges of his shapes and the straight edges of the canvas. Reed took advantage of this and began to superimpose curvilinear shapes on diagonal geometric grids which appeared to lay back while the shapes upon them seemed to rise up off the surface into space.

In 1963 he included a second smaller "fragment" or "satellite" canvas as part of the total painting. These fragments were hung beside the larger canvases to which they related in shape, color, and extension of the background lines of the grid thus enabling Reed to, in some measure, control the total wall.

Reed next took up the idea of the centered image from Noland's targets and proceeded to subject it to a series of metamorphoses. He experimented simultaneously with effects of transparency suggested to him by the works of Morris Louis. He superimposed discs in complementary colors over centered circles of kidney beans creating a sensation of layers of space within the painting.

Reed finally eliminated the bean shapes altogether leaving the disc on a field saturated by color. He cut the field in opposite corners with diagonal wedges of a different, overlaid hue. By juxtaposing complements he was able to produce an after-image, and the disc, as a result, gave the appearance of hovering in space in front of the painting. This effect was similar to the one achieved by Thomas Downing in his grids, dials, and dotted parallelograms.

Reed has also explored the space-delineating qualities of color with the progression of hues on a grid format and Z-shaped overlapping bands. He has recently shaped the canvas edge, radically altering the relationship of the canvas to the wall, going far beyond the control, through color, of total space and shape, he had attempted much earlier with the "fragments." In many of his most recent works Reed has treated certain areas of the canvas in a painterly mode to further emphasize color's expressive capacity to create an illusion of spatial depth.

NOTE

I wish to acknowledge particularly the following sources in compiling "Notes on the Washington Color Painters":

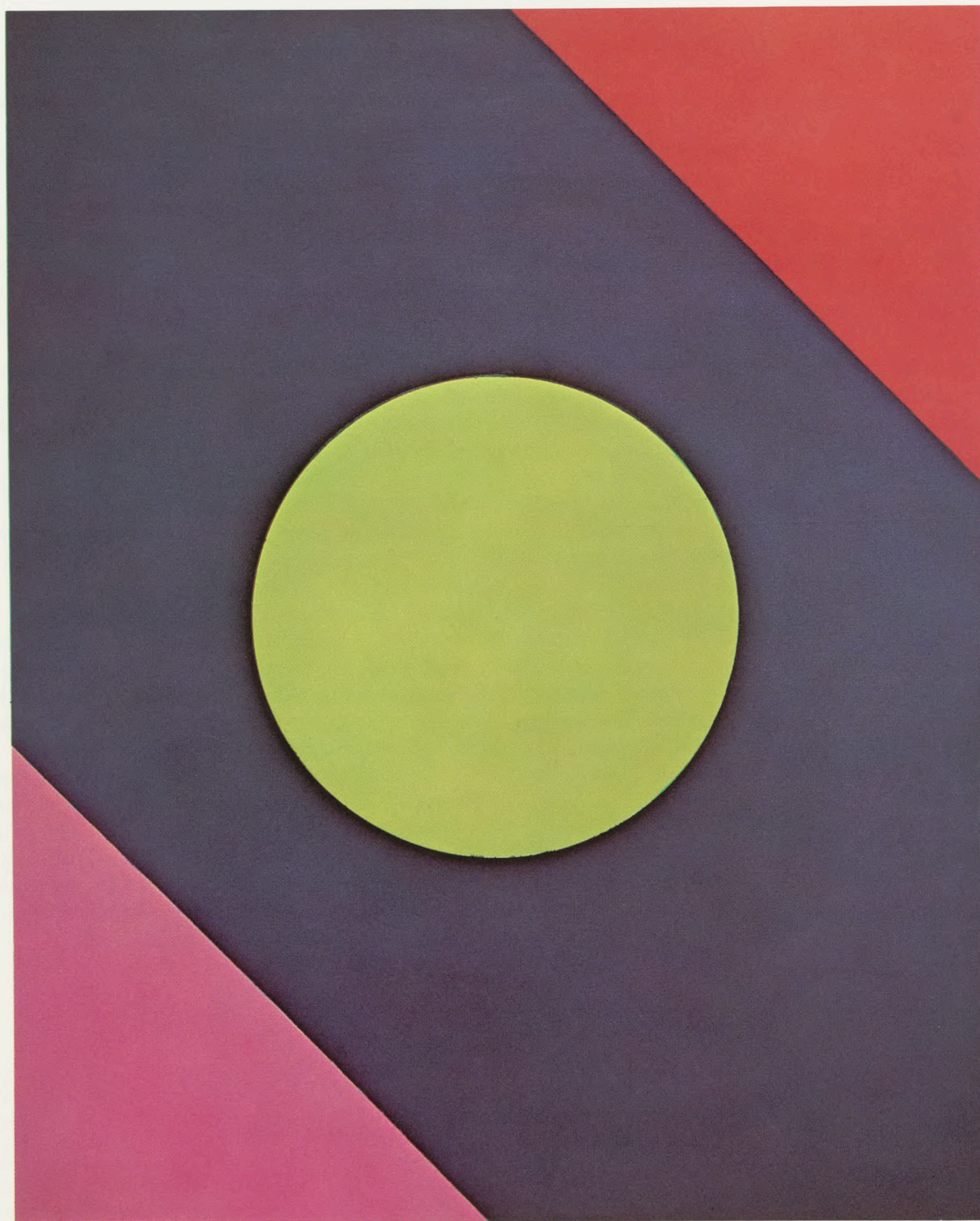
Fried, Michael. *Morris Louis 1912-1962*, Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, 1967.

Fried, Michael. *Three American Painters. Noland, Olitski, Stella*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University, 1965.

Wall, Don. "Gene Davis and the Issue of Complexity," *Studio International*, vol. 180, #927 (Nov. 1970), pp. 188-191.

The section on Thomas Downing was mostly taken from my article "The Illusion of Space in the Work of Thomas Downing, Paul Reed and Howard Mehring," *Washington—Twenty Years*, Baltimore, Maryland: Baltimore Museum of Art, 1970 (written under my maiden name, Ellen Hope Gross).

E.G.L.



123. REED, Thalene III, 1965

ADDITIONAL ILLUSTRATIONS



68. DE KOONING, Landscape, c. 1948



69. DE KOONING, Untitled, 1950



71. DE KOONING, Untitled, 1951



70. DE KOONING, Woman, 1951



59. GOLDBERG, New Canaan, 1959

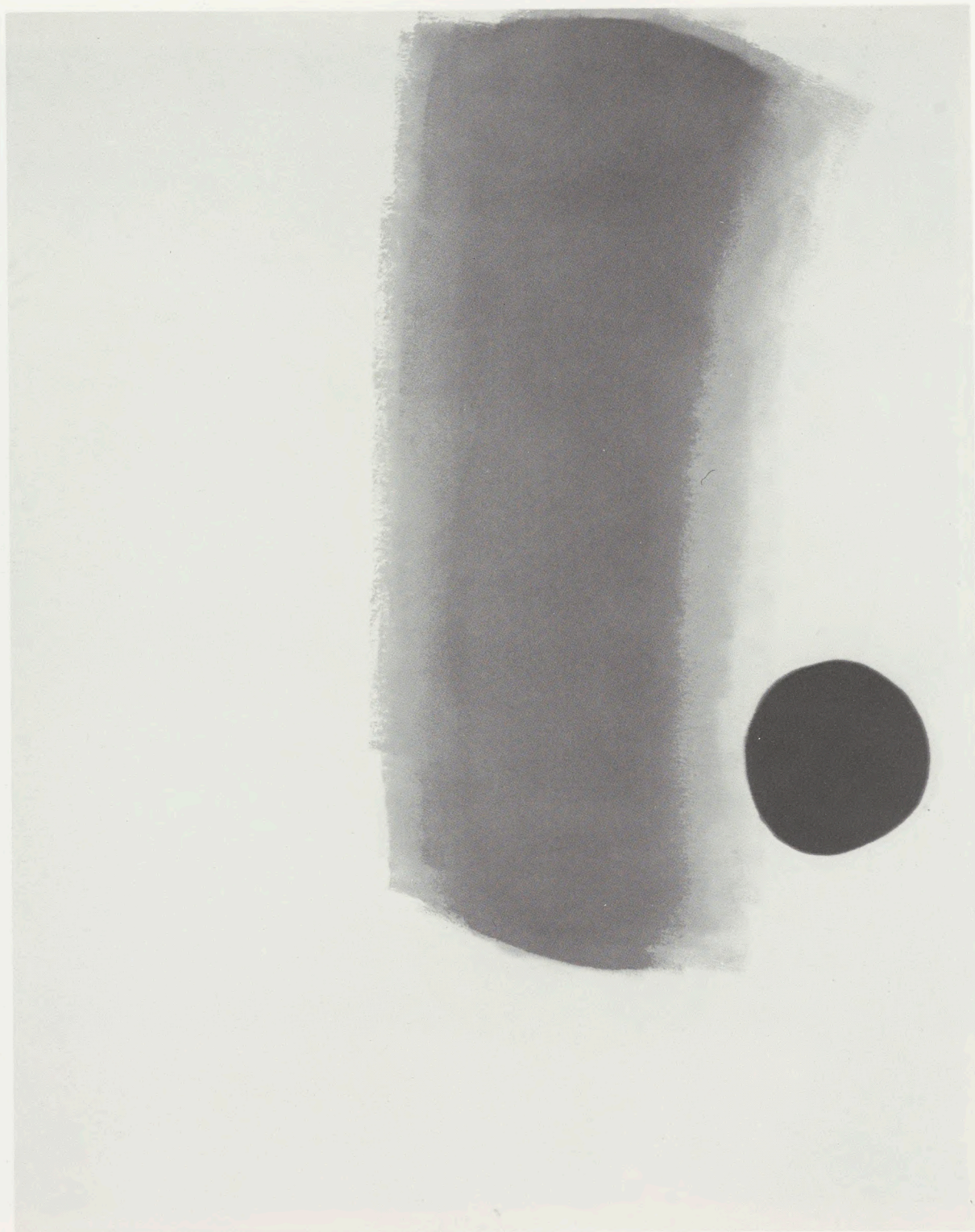


2. BLUHM, Madman's Oasis, 1957





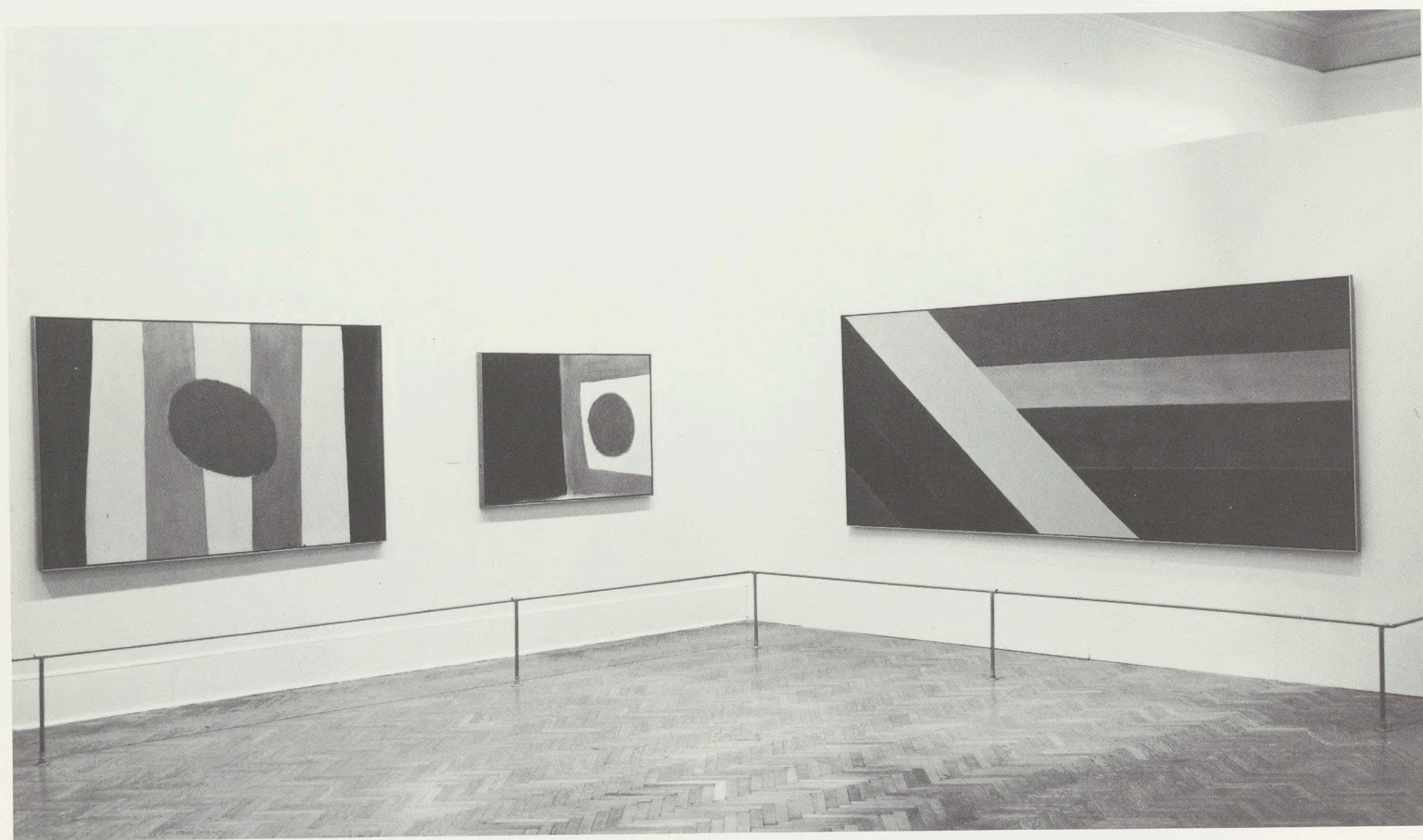
1. BLUHM, Silence, 1957



114. OLITSKI, *Orange Column*, c. 1962



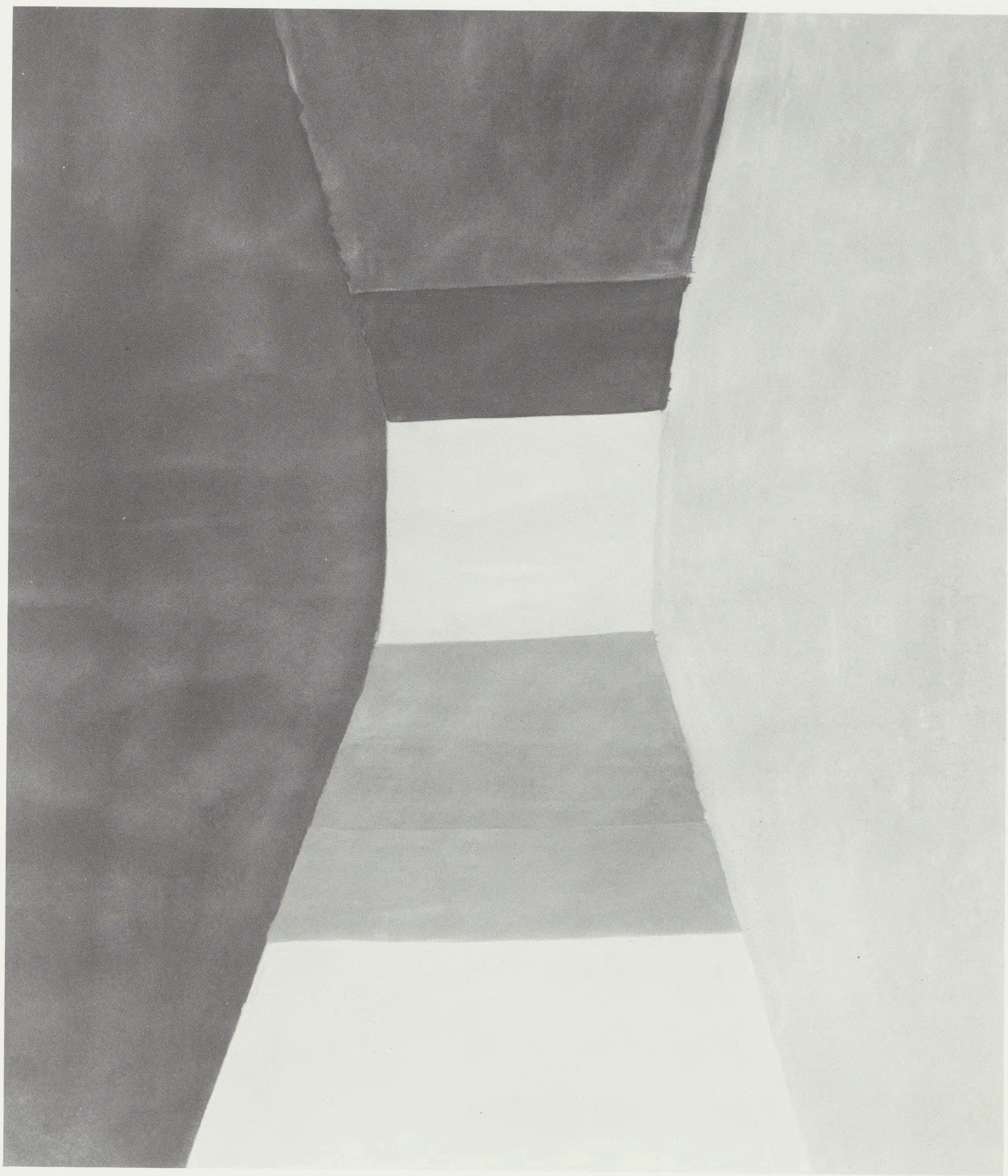
58. FENTON, Kinsman I, 1963



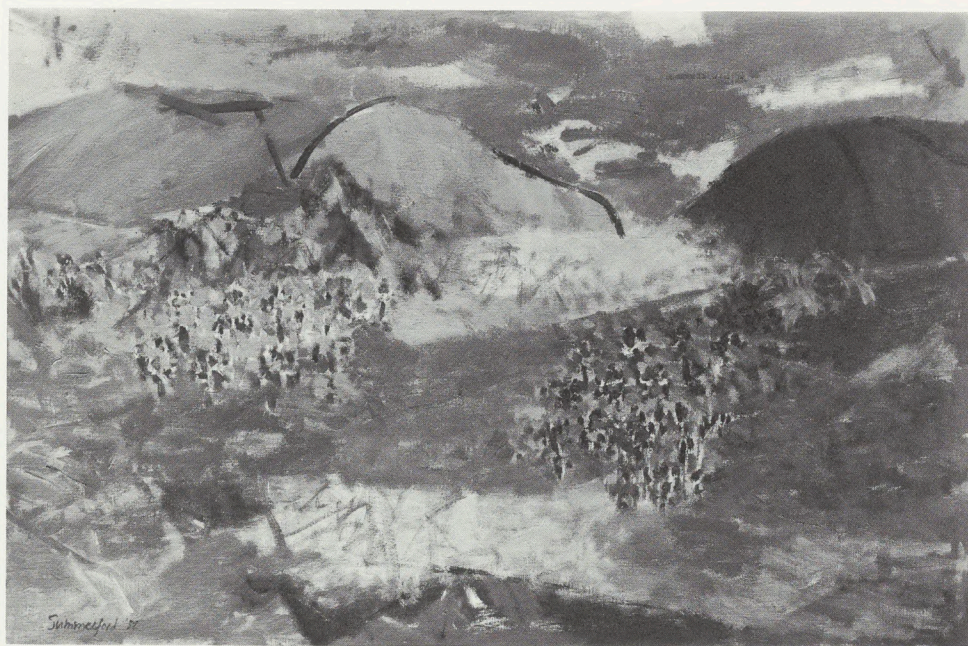
BUSH 13. Robbins Egg, 1960

15. Paris #4, 1962

20. Swim, 1967



18. BUSH, Orange Centre, c. 1964



134. SUMMERFORD, West Virginia Mountains, 1952



104. NOLAND, Untitled, c. 1952-53



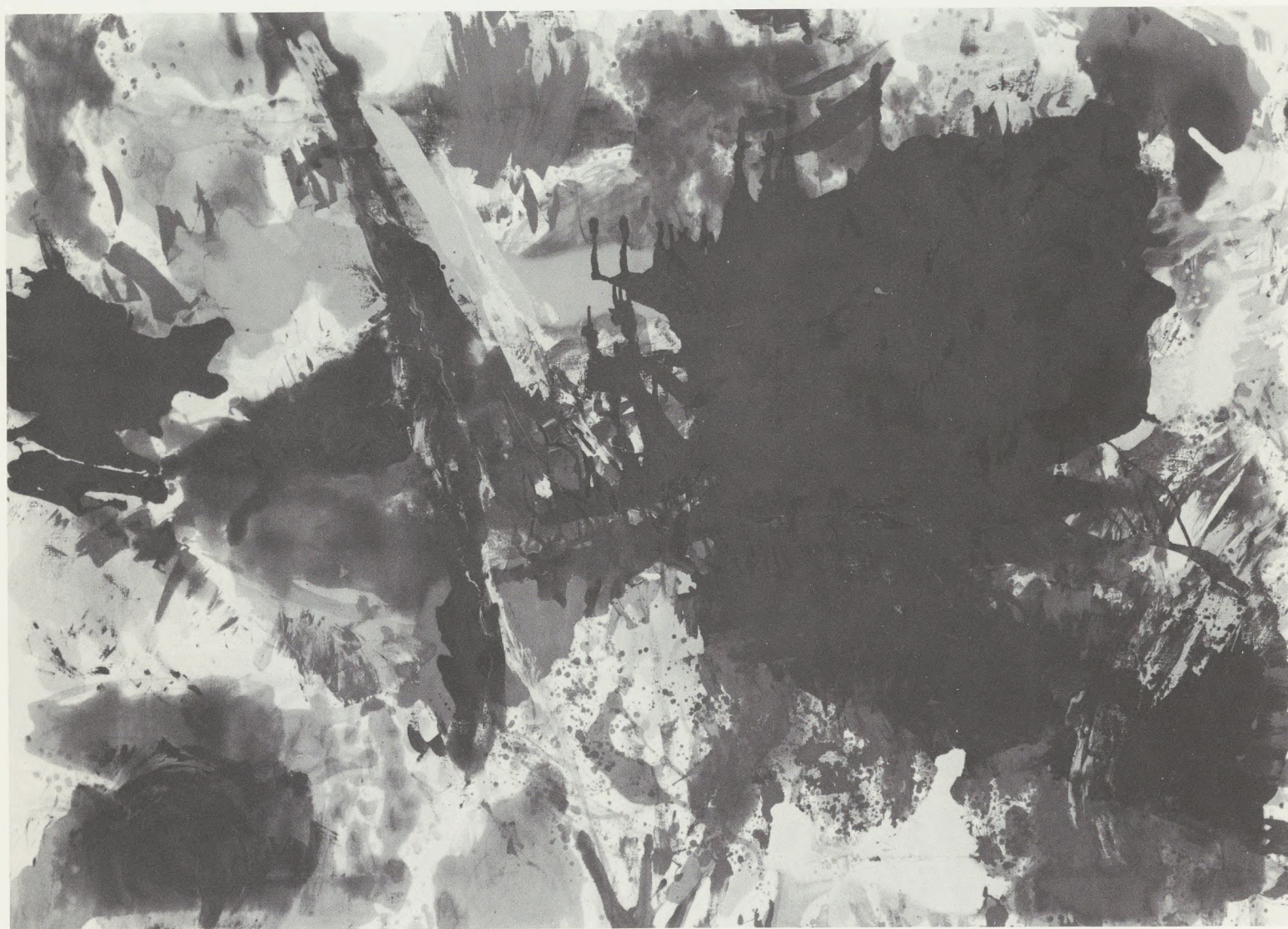
21. DAVIS, Untitled, c. 1953-54



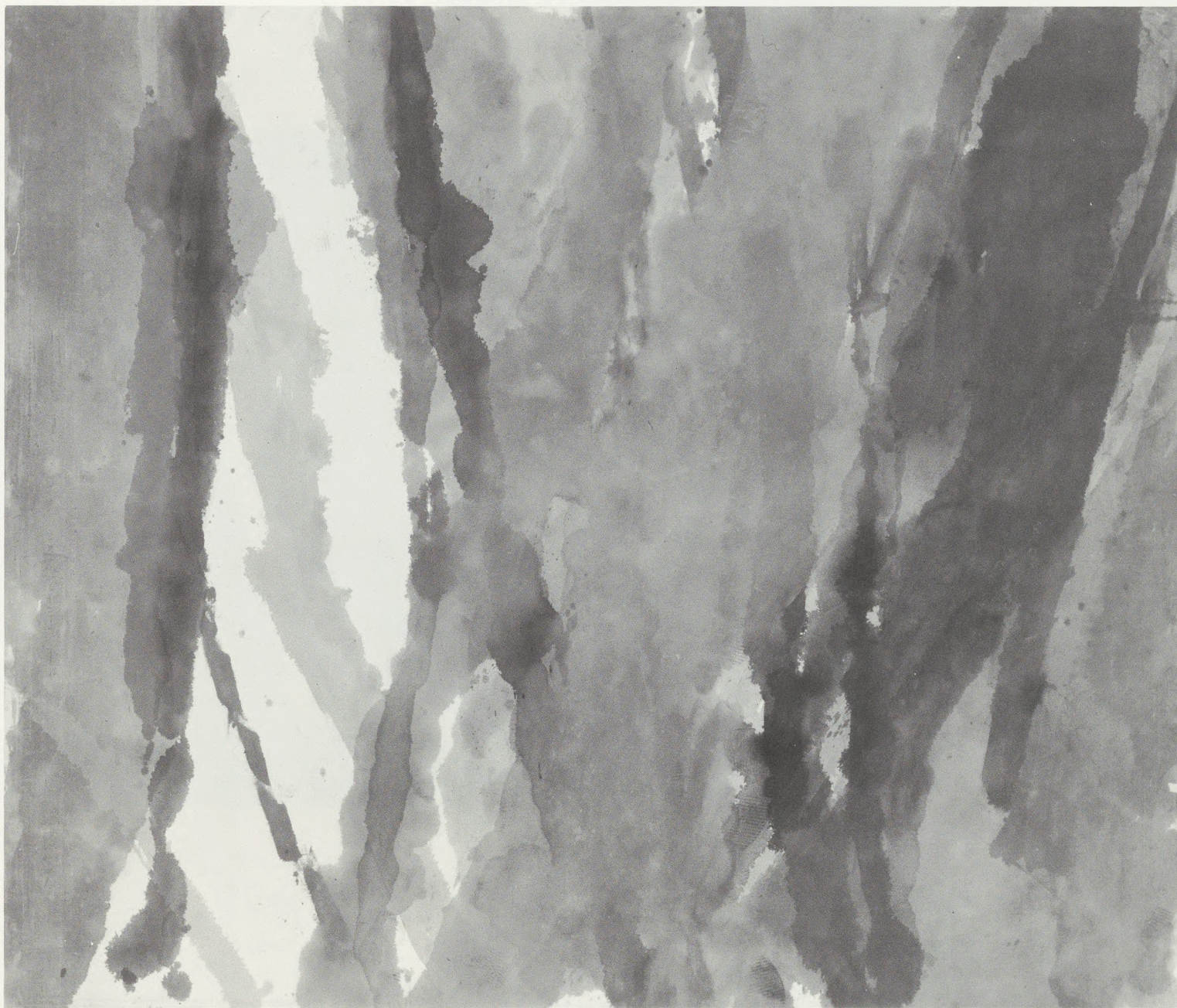
80. MEHRING, Untitled, 1954



115. REED, Untitled, c. 1955

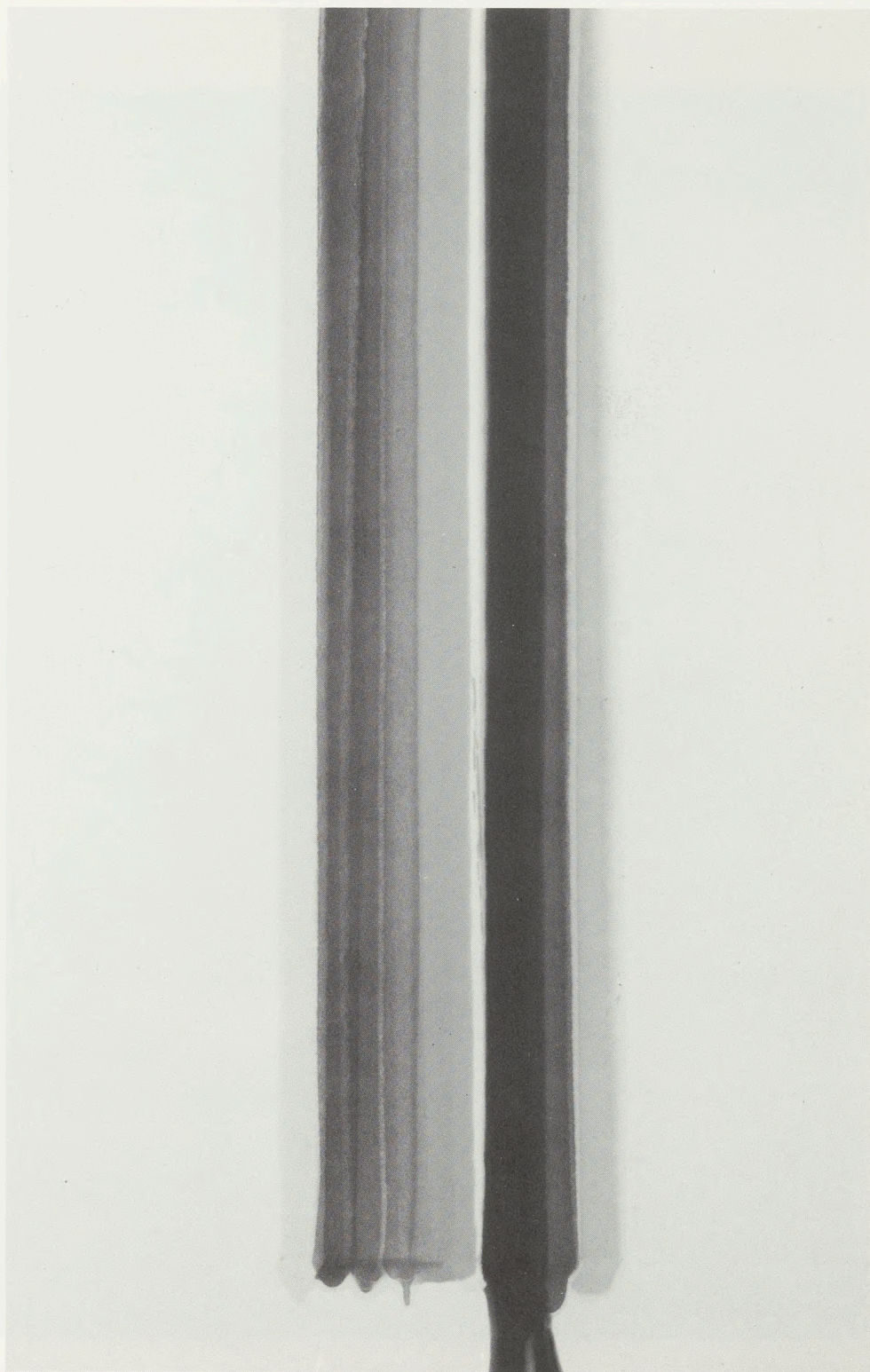


74. LOUIS, Untitled, 1956

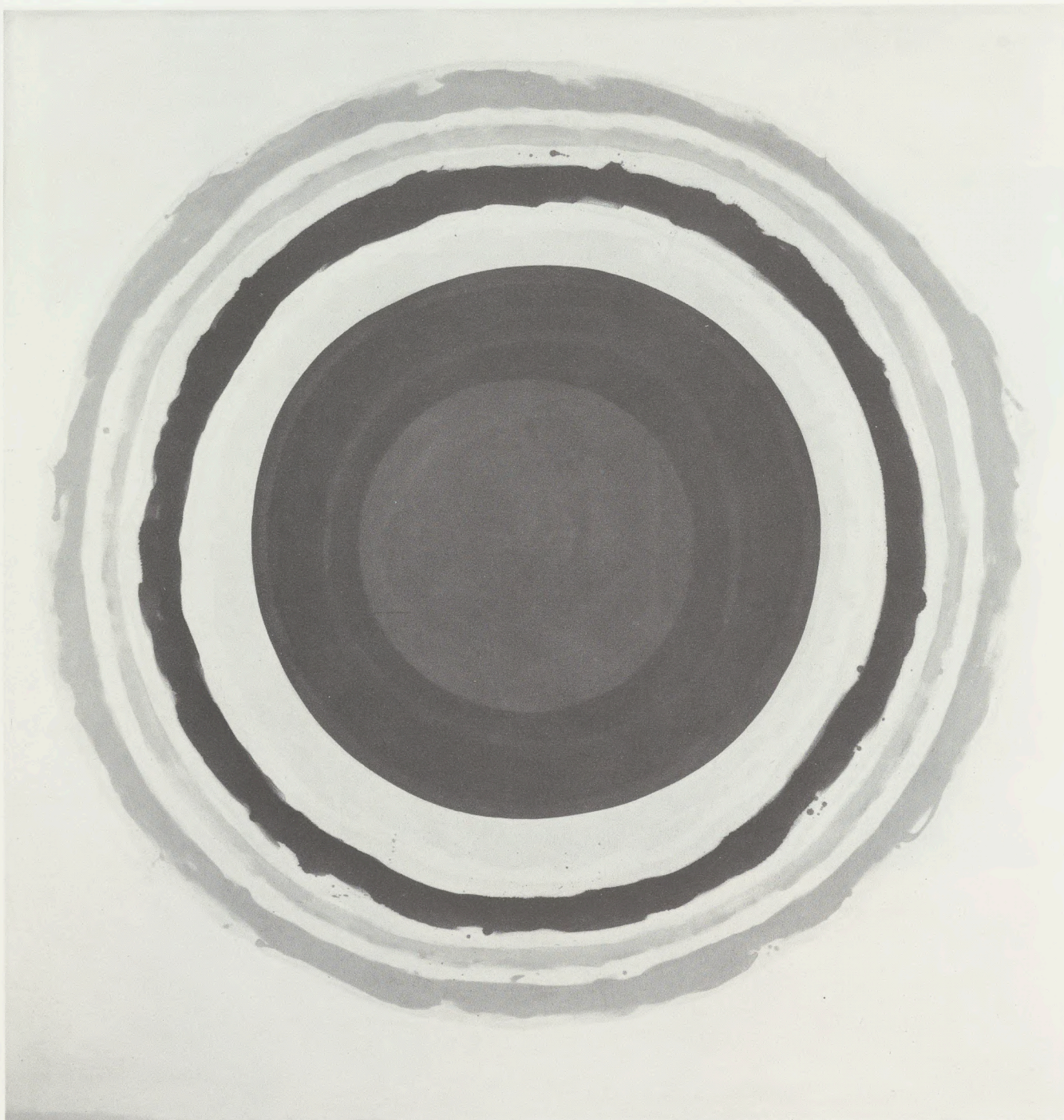


34. DOWNING, Oregon, 1955

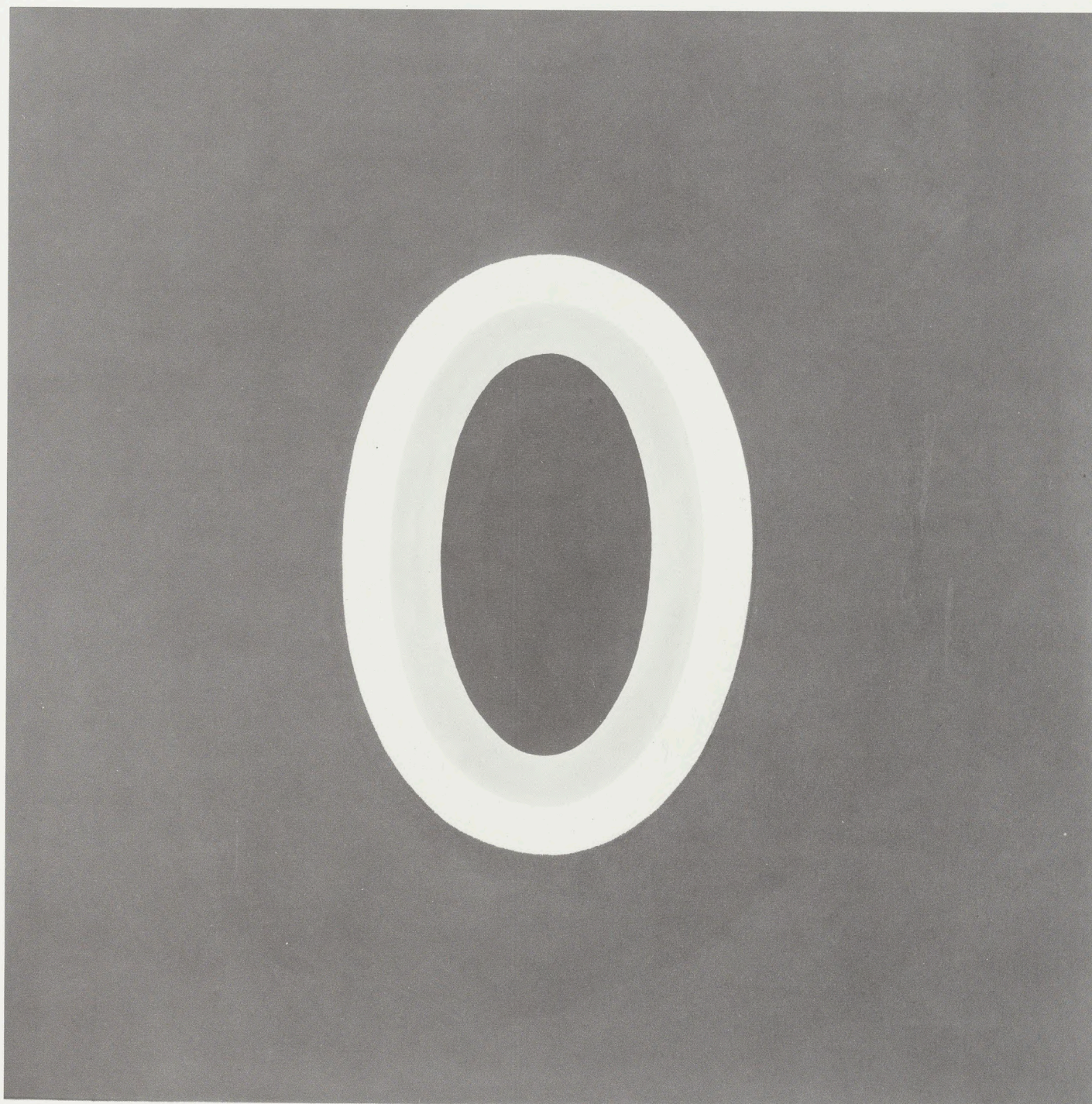




79. LOUIS, Pillar of Celebration, 1961



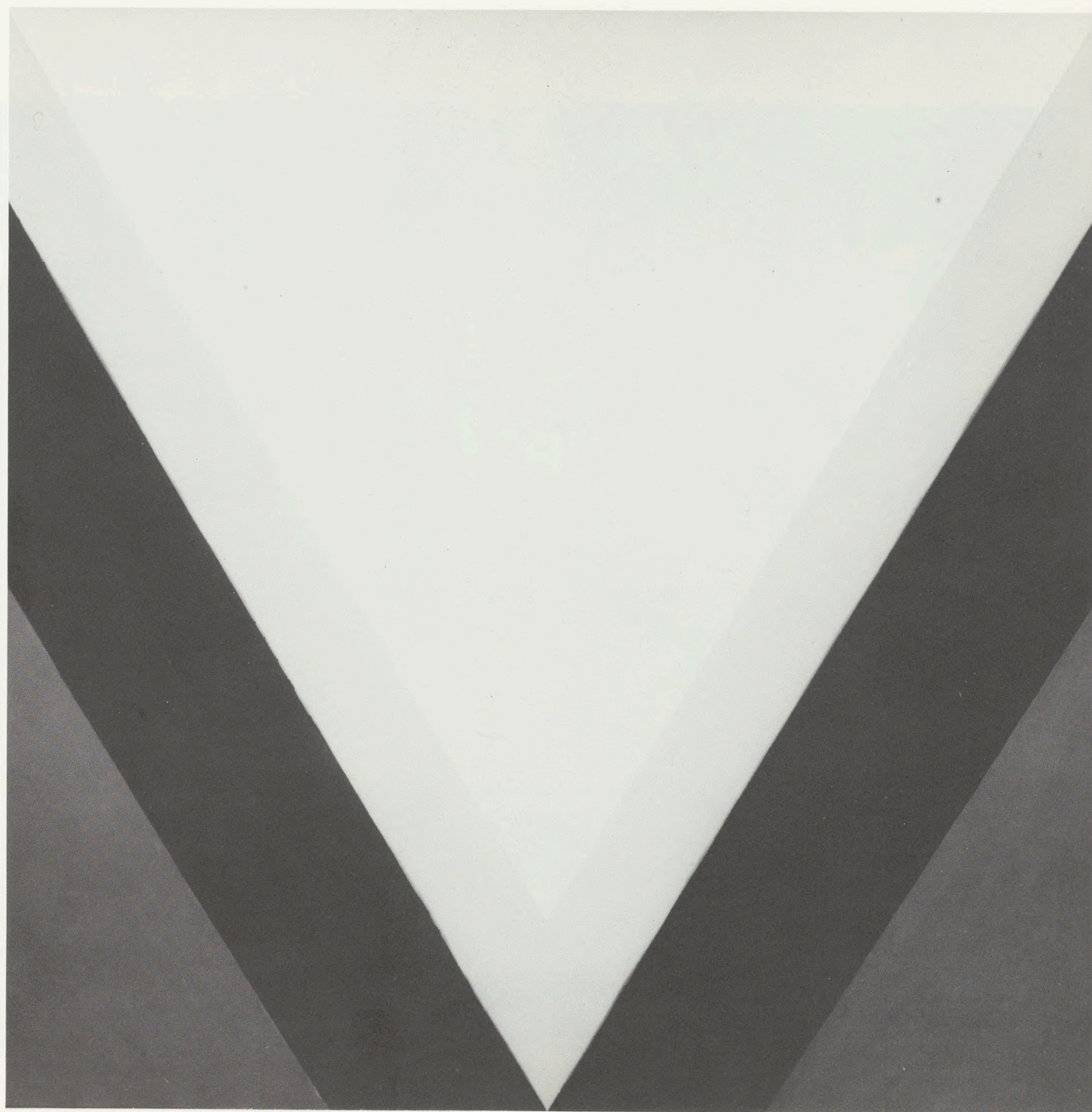
105. NOLAND, Rest, 1958



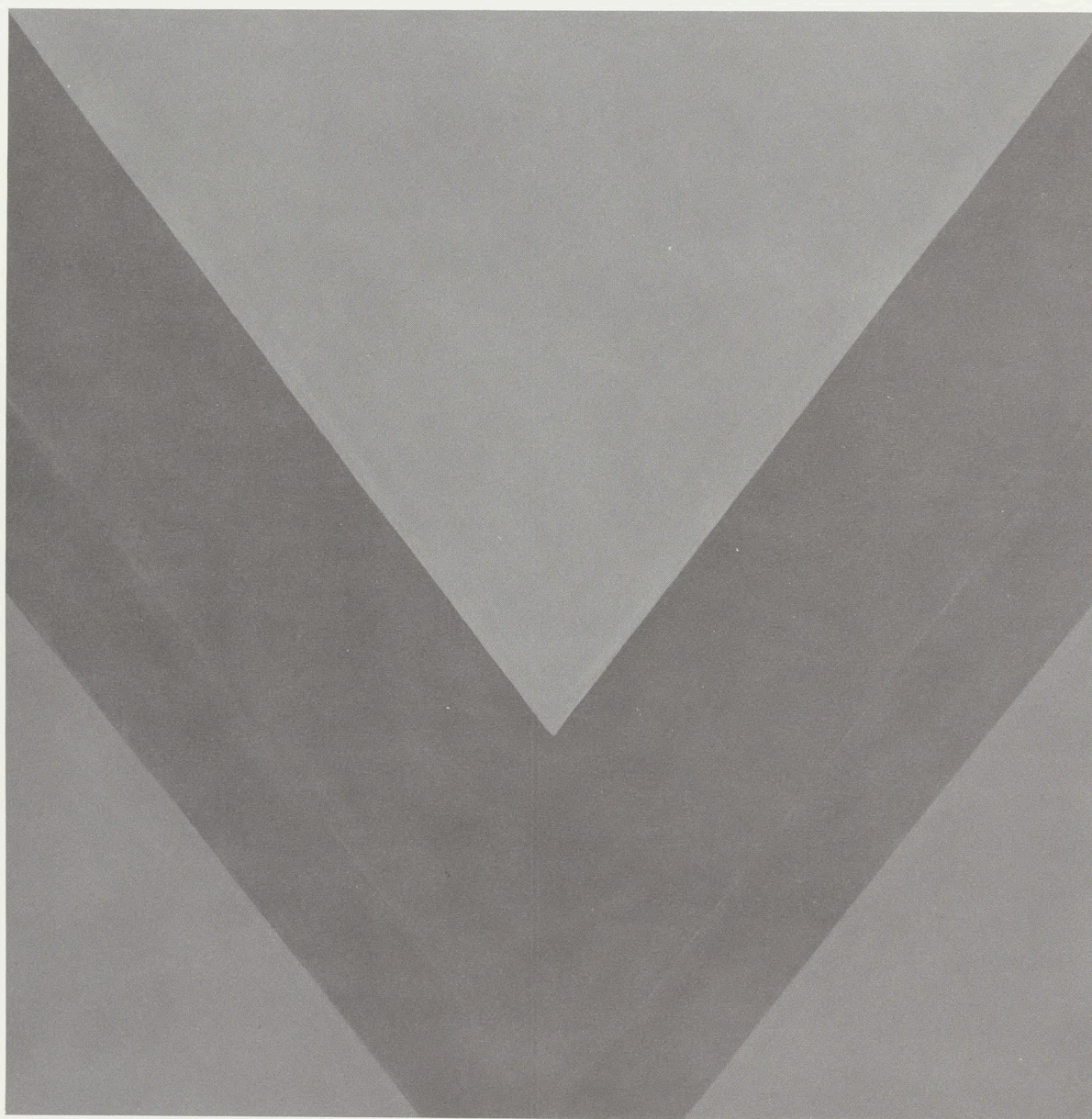
107. NOLAND, Quiet Night, c. 1960-61



110. NOLAND, Tripex, 1963

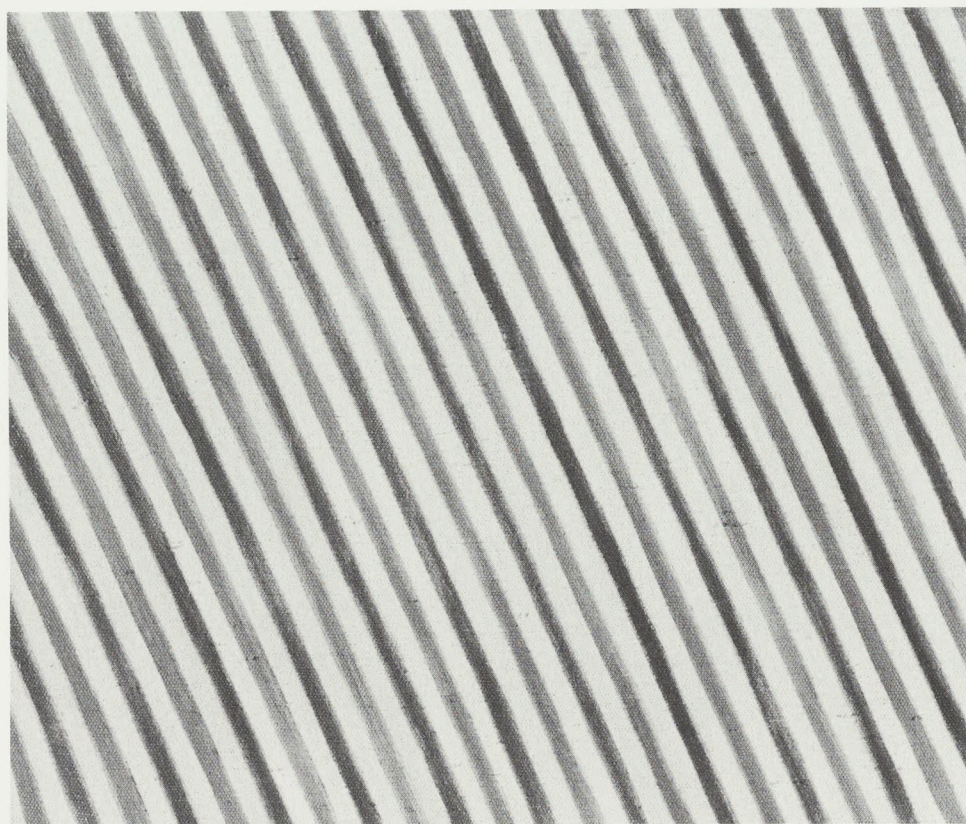


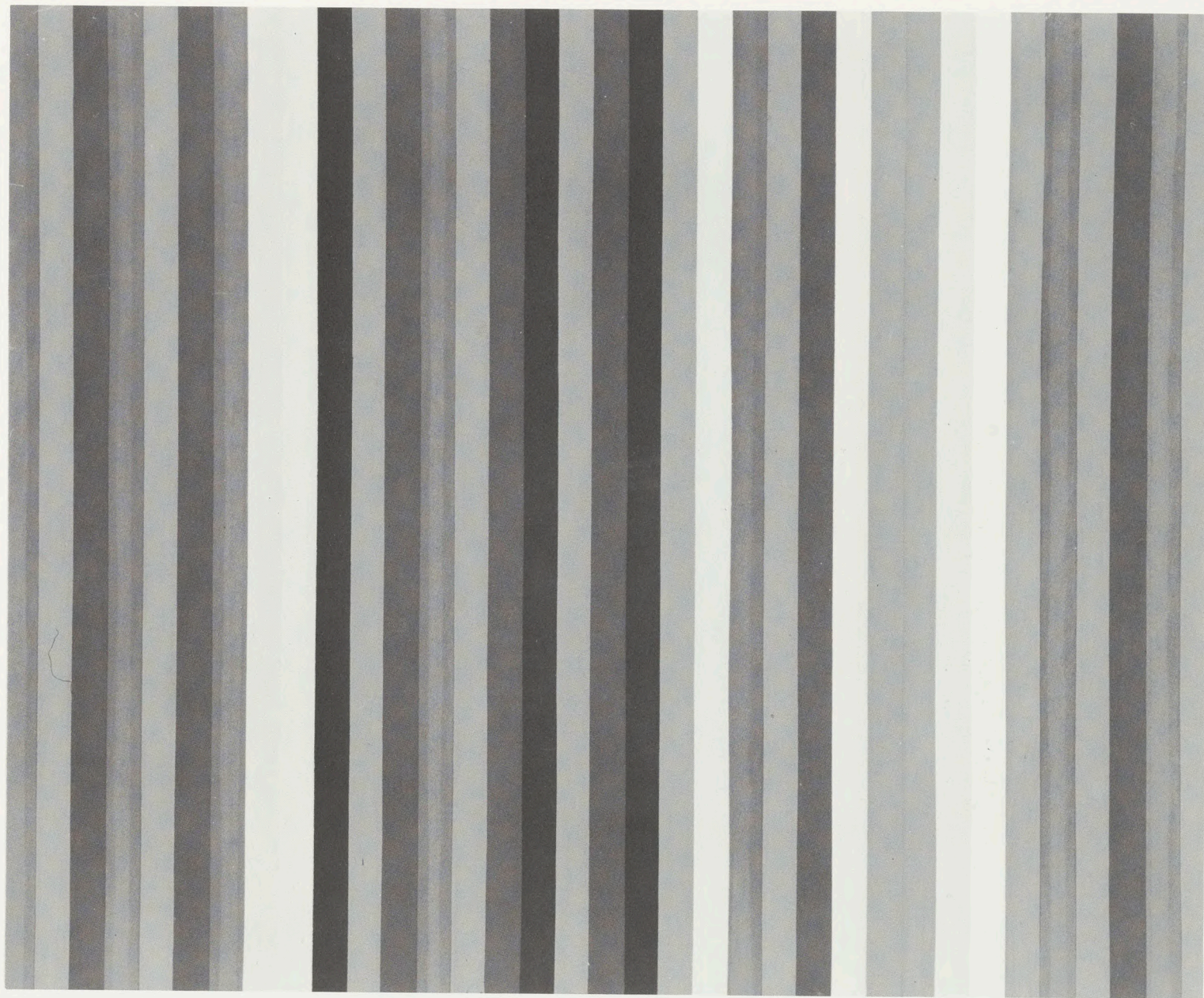
109. NOLAND, East-West, 1963



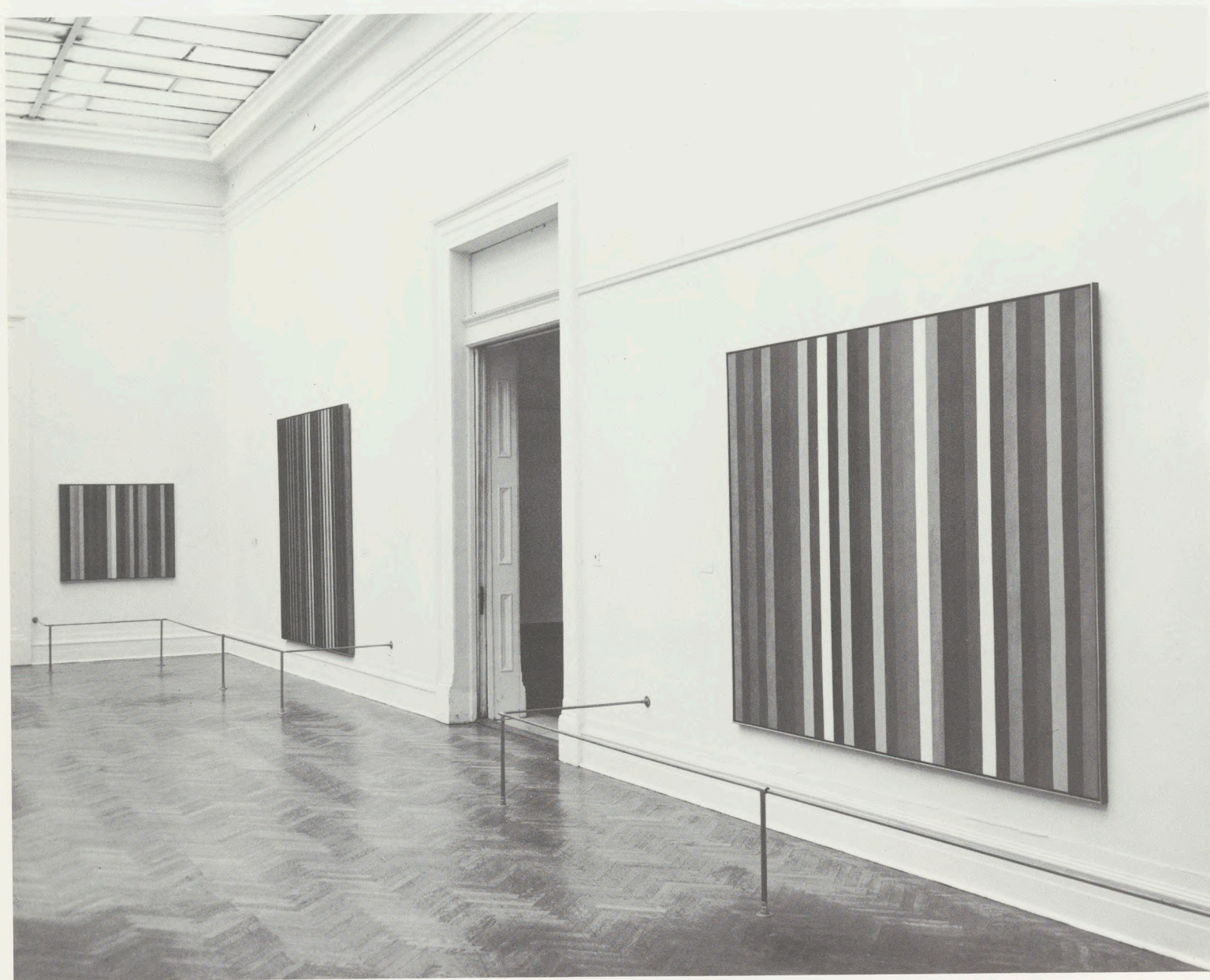


111. NOLAND, Shoot, 1964





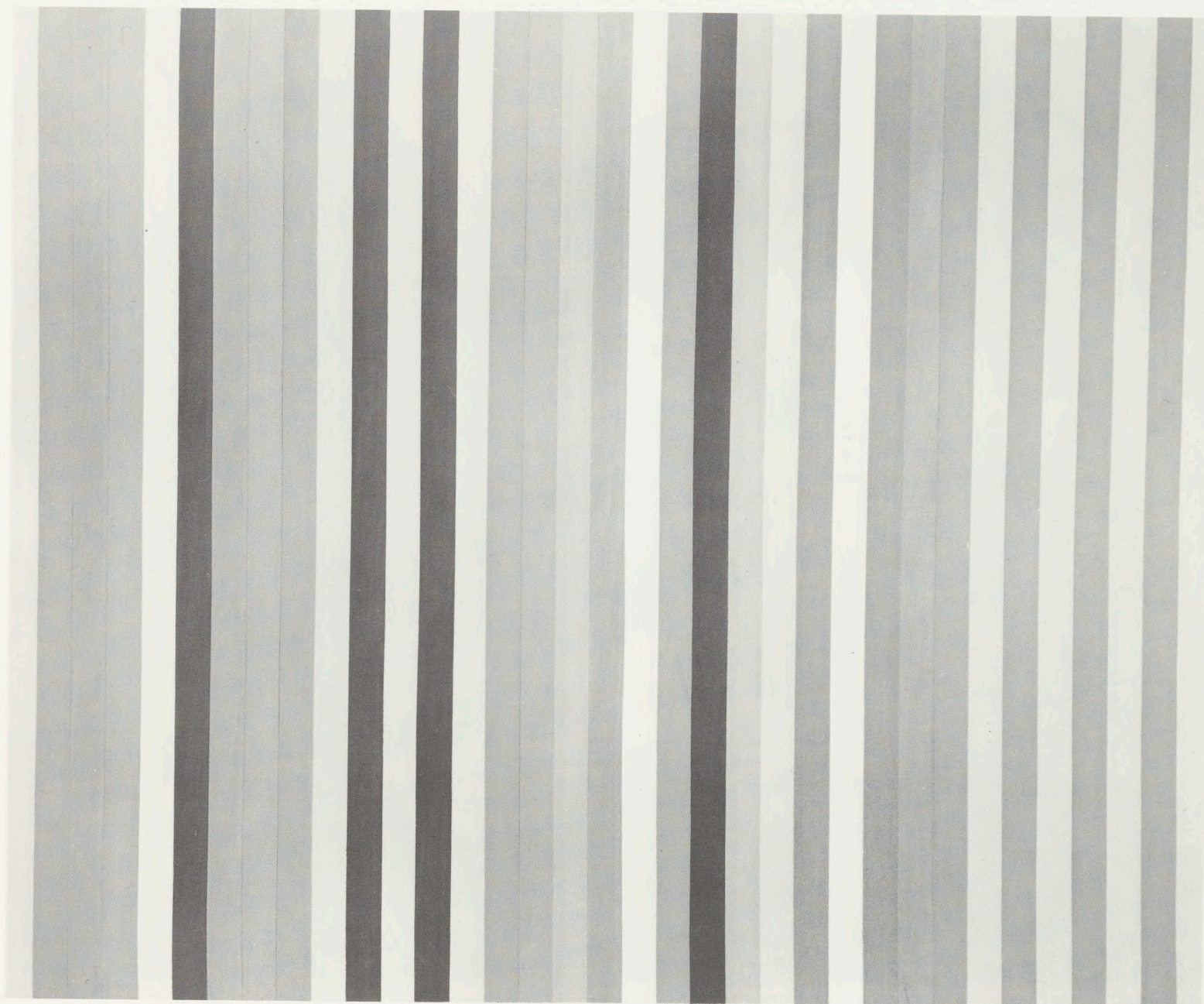
33. DAVIS, Untitled, c. 1965



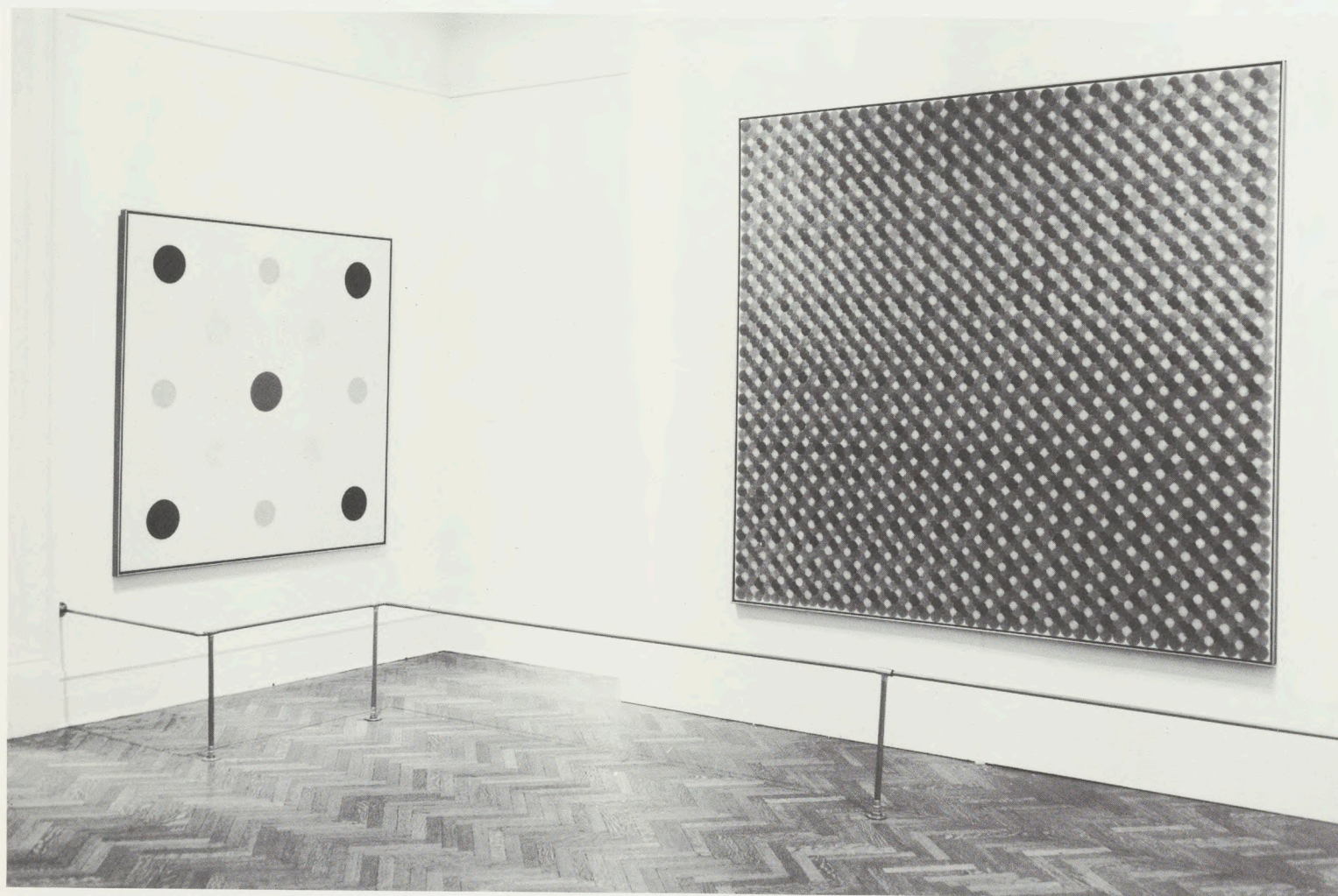
DAVIS 30. Sour Ball Beat, c. 1964

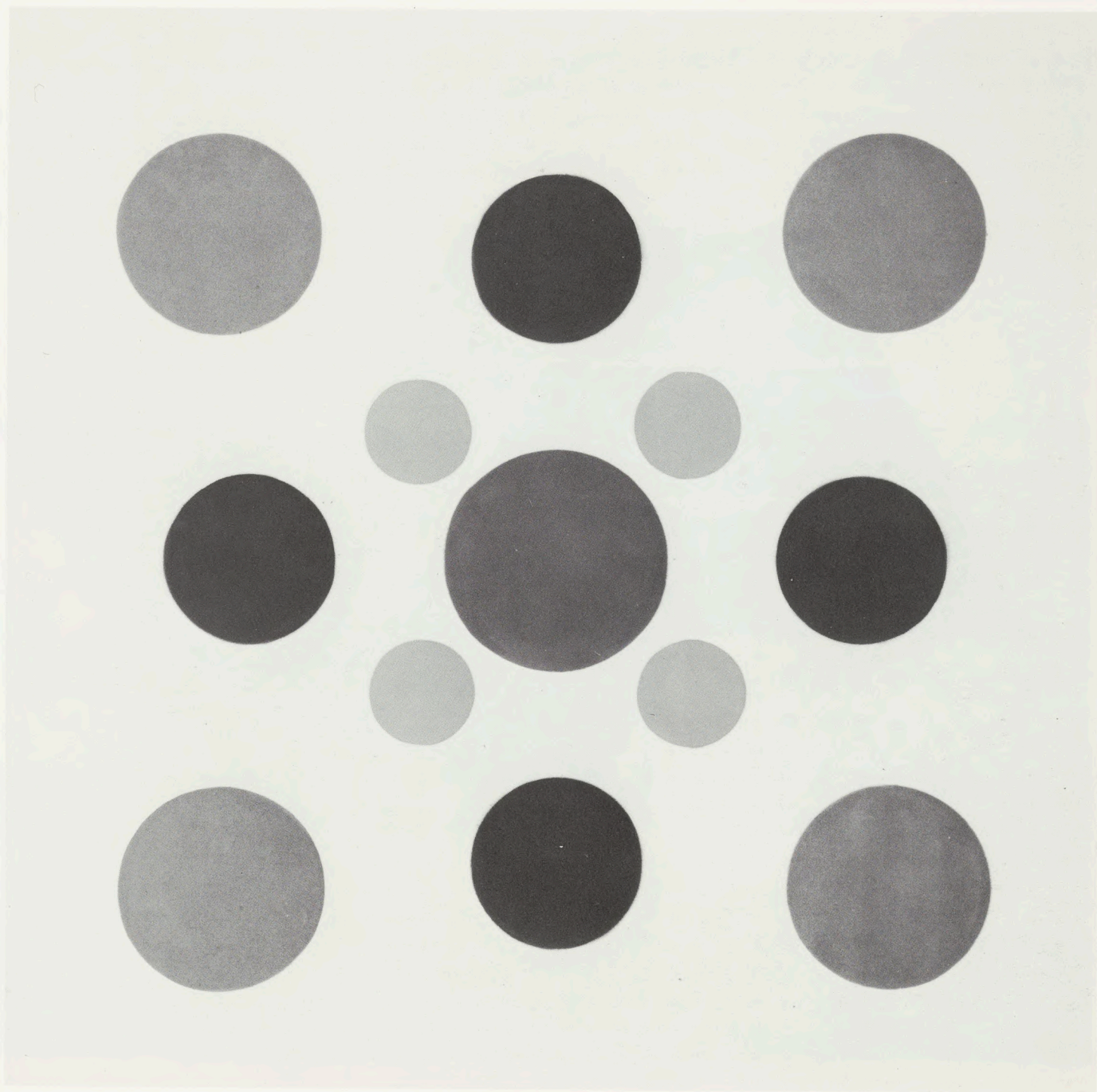
29. Black Rhythm, 1964

32. Scarlet Hop, c. 1964

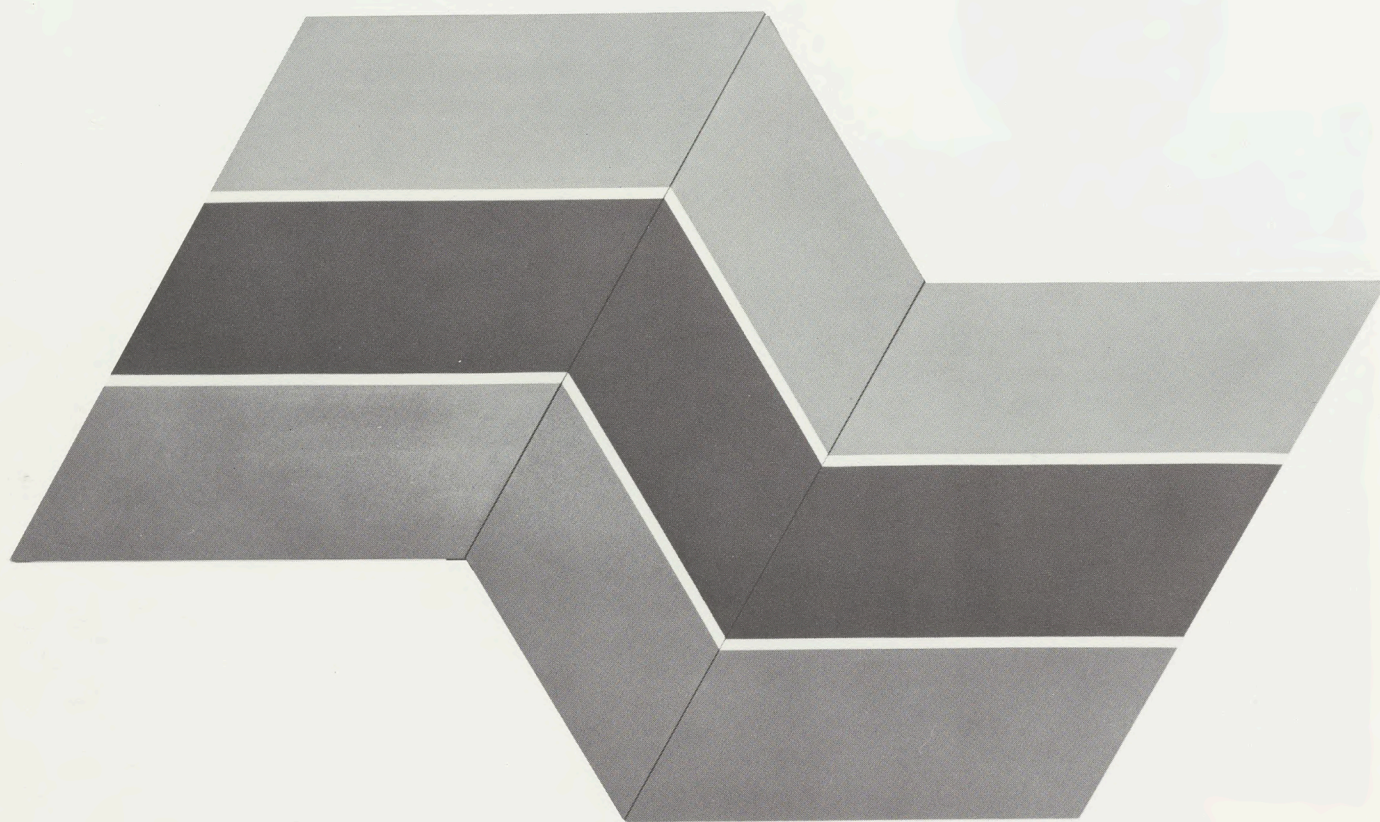


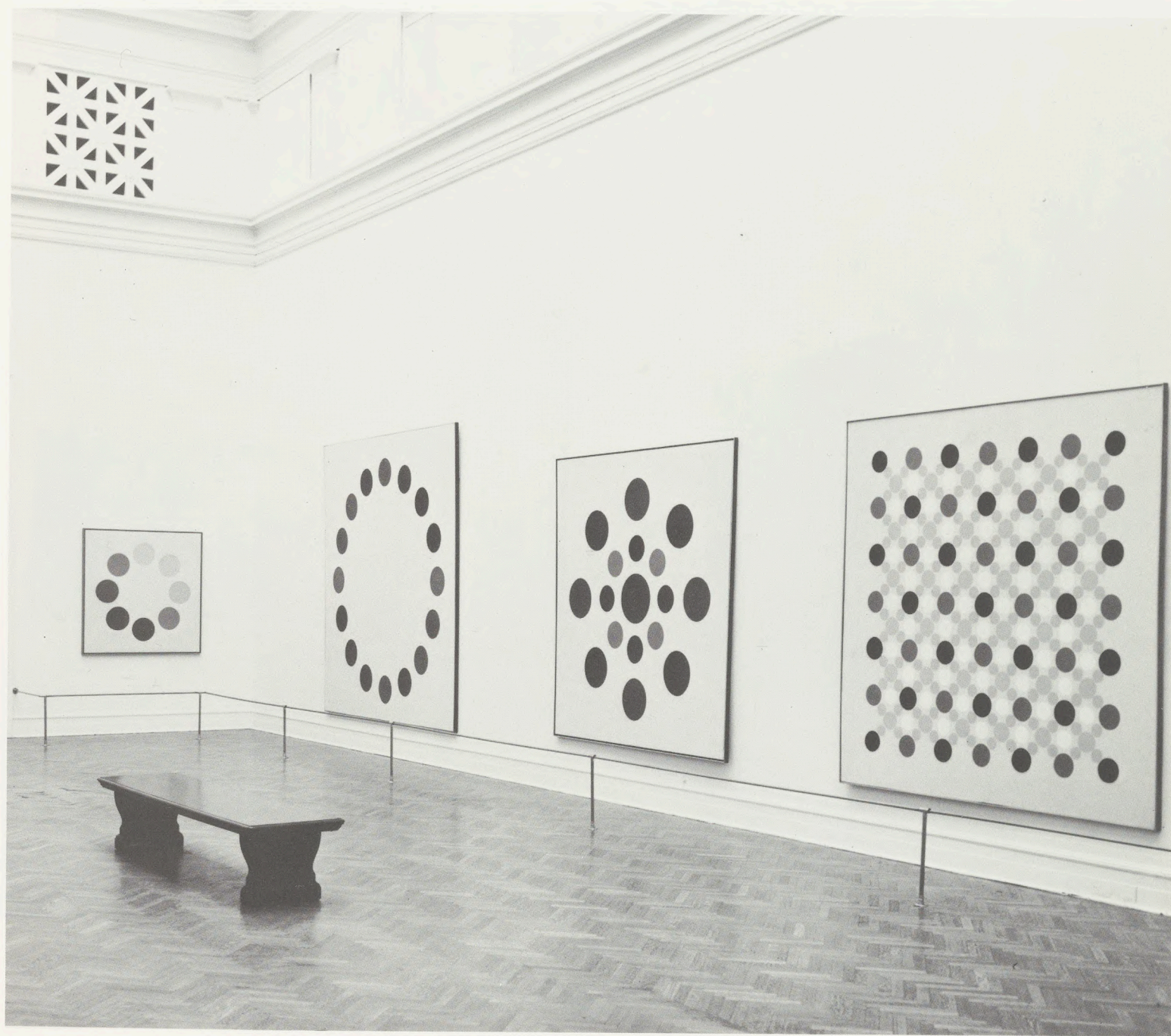
28. DAVIS, Cool Sling, 1964





49. DOWNING, ViVi, 1965





DOWNING

46. Bahama Air, 1964

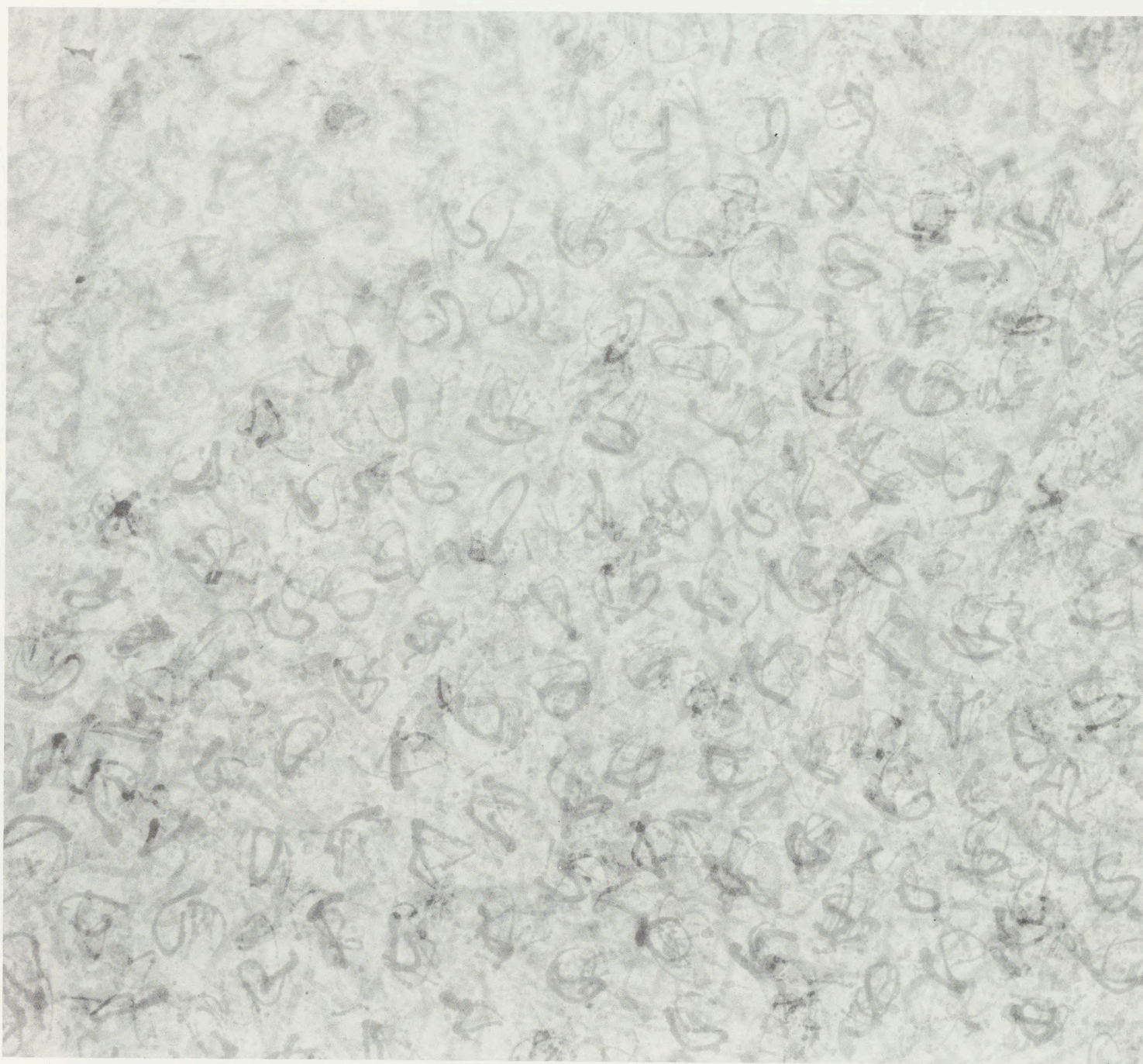
42. Ring Three, 1969

44. Red Shade, 1963

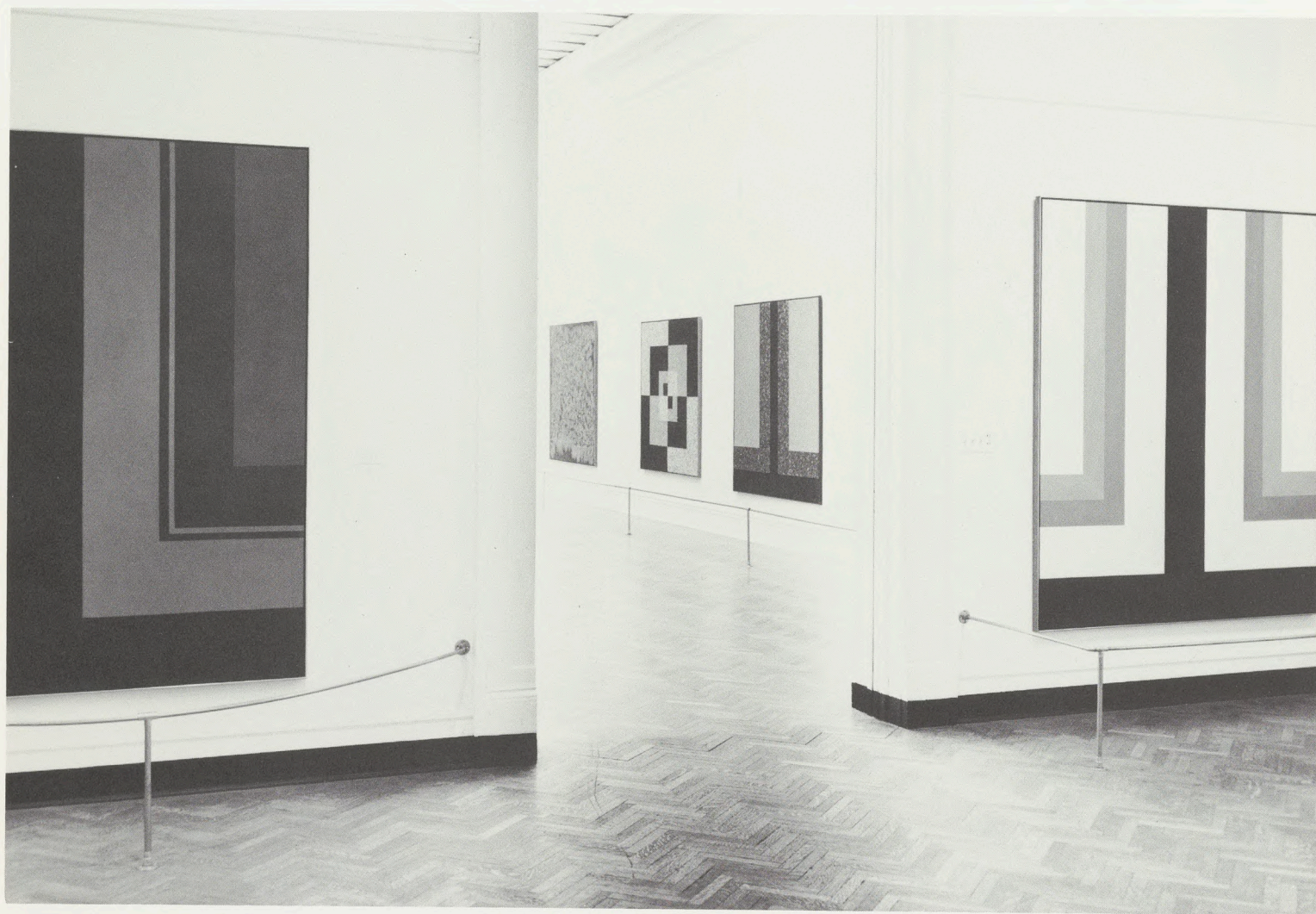
43. Rivet Lilt, c. 1962



MEHRING 95. Untitled, 1961 91. Untitled, 1960 97. Untitled, 1961 85. Untitled, c. 1957 92. Untitled, 1960



84. MEHRING, Untitled, 1957



MEHRING

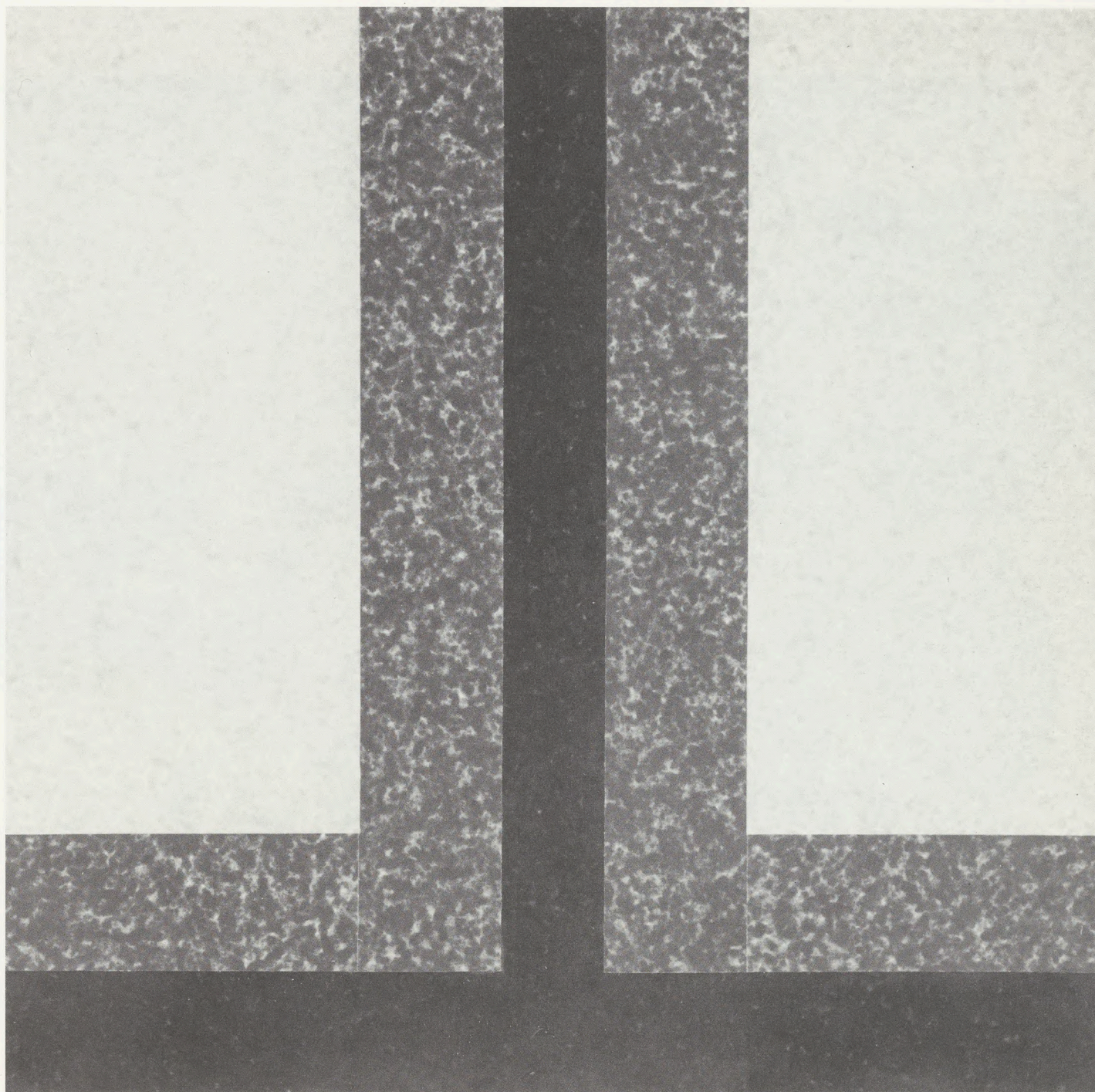
102. Untitled, 1964

89. Untitled, c. 1958

94. Untitled, 1961

100. The Key, 1963

101. Untitled, 1964



100. MEHRING, The Key, 1963





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CATALOGUE OF SELECTIONS FROM THE MELZAC COLLECTION

Dimensions are listed in inches, height preceding width. Paintings marked with an asterisk were included in the Corcoran Gallery exhibition of the Vincent Melzac Collection, December 18, 1970 through February 7, 1971.

NORMAN BLUHM

Born March 28, 1920 in Chicago, Illinois. Studied architecture at the Illinois Institute of Technology and with Mies van der Rohe in 1936, 1945-47. Studied painting at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts and the Académie de la Grande Chaumière, Paris. Lived and worked in Paris 1947-56, 1964-65. Lives in Millbrook, New York.

1. *Silence*, 1957
oil on canvas
72 x 68½
Cat. nos. 1 and 2 are excellent examples of the evenly-lit all-over Pollock-influenced paintings done by Bluhm after his return from Paris to New York. The active areas are both tight and expansive and there is a sensation that the totality extends beyond the edges of the canvas.
- * 2. *Madman's Oasis*, 1957
oil on canvas
84 x 72
3. *Orphée*, 1958
oil on canvas
84 x 72
- * 4. *Citrus*, 1959
oil on canvas
72 x 108
As he increased the size of his canvases, Bluhm freed line of the restriction of creating pattern and his joy in sheer physical expression became more apparent.
- * 5. *Untitled*, 1959
oil on canvas
66 x 59½
6. *French 75*, 1960
oil on canvas
59⅞ x 31
Exhib: one-man show, Leo Castelli Gallery, New York (1960).
- * 7. *Breathing*, 1962
oil on canvas
73 x 61½
Most of Bluhm's initial gestures have been painted over, leaving only their edges or drips, behind larger, more static shapes. Pictorial incident is reduced and the figure and the space it occupies seem to be almost in a state of equilibrium.

8. *Talkhouse Hill*, 1966

oil on canvas
84 x 72

Exhib: *Paintings by Norman Bluhm*, The Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D. C. (Mar. 21-Apr. 20, 1969), cat. no. 8.

Here is the large turned-in form which has become the trademark of Bluhm's more recent work. This thickly-painted "linear" shape enables him to pull together different areas without an all-over distribution of emphasis. The edges of this form are irregular and the background sometimes shows through, creating a sense of depth. These works were painted after a return trip to Paris in 1964-65.

* 9. *Argentine Kid*, 1966

oil on canvas
73¾ x 91½

In this work hue and value contrasts are more highly keyed and tension exists between the dark, inward-turning "C" form and the open light areas.

* 10. *Yellow Rock*, 1966

oil on canvas
72 x 108 (each 36 x 72)

* 11. *Eudocia*, 1967

oil on canvas
90 x 72

Many recent works are named after Greek goddesses and originate out of sketches of the female nude.

12. *Untitled*, 1969

oil on canvas
28 x 24

Fewer lines and drips are present in this late work in which the figure predominates over the ground.

JACK BUSH

Born March 20, 1909 in Toronto, Canada. Studied in Montreal with Edmund Dyonnet, Adam Sheriff Scott, and in Toronto with Frederick Challiner, John Alfsen and Charles Comfort. One of the founding members of "Painters Eleven," a group formed to introduce abstract painting to Canada. Received Canada Council Senior Fellowship for study in Europe and New York in 1962. Awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship in 1968. Lives in Toronto, Canada.

* 13. *Robbins Egg* (sic), 1960

oil on canvas
51 x 82¼

This was painted shortly after Bush turned away from thick impastoed gestural paintings to simplified, evenly brushed canvases, on the advice of American critic Clement Greenberg.

- * 14. *Green Garden*, 1961
oil on canvas
46 x 80
Ref: Morris, Jerrold. *On the Enjoyment of Modern Art*, Toronto: McLelland & Stewart, Ltd., 1965, p. 70, ill. pl. 30.
- * 15. *Paris #4*, 1962
oil on canvas
33-3/16 x 57-3/16
One of a series Bush painted while on a Canada Council grant visit to Europe. His colors were taken from the flags of France, Spain, and Italy.
16. *Red, Tan on Blue*, 1963
oil on canvas
70-7/16 x 44 3/4
From his series of variations on a similar fish shape. The biomorphic forms Bush used at this time set him off from the American color field painters.
- * 17. *Okemos*, c. 1964
oil on canvas
68 1/2 x 90 1/4
- * 18. *Orange Centre*, c. 1964
oil on canvas
81 x 68 1/2
Here a vertical column of color blocks is pulled inward at the center. This "sash" type of format seems to have grown directly out of the fish shapes.
19. *Mabel's Release #5*, 1966
acrylic on canvas
30 1/4 x 19 3/4
The blocks of color are now more specifically related to one of the directions of the framing edge. The use of acrylic paint produces a softer, more translucent surface. The figure-ground orientation of the earlier work has been eliminated.
- * 20. *Swim*, 1967
acrylic on canvas
56 3/4 x 143
Exhib: *Arte Canadese Contemporanea*, Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna, Rome, Italy (1968).
- GENE DAVIS**
Born August 22, 1920 in Washington, D. C. Studied University of Maryland and Wilson Teacher's College. Worked in the 1940's as a journalist. Studied art informally with Jacob Kainen in the early 1950's. Taught painting at the Corcoran School of Art, 1966 and 1970-71. Lives in Washington, D. C.
21. *Untitled*, c. 1953-54
oil on masonite
24 x 18
A sketchy gestural work which shows the influence of de Kooning. The de Kooning style proved to be a dead-end for Davis although it took him several years to work his way out of it.
22. *Untitled*, 1954
oil on masonite
41 1/2 x 29 1/2
Exhib: *Collection of Vincent Melzac*, Watkins Gallery, American University, Washington, D. C. (Nov. 9-Dec. 7, 1957).
23. *Red Violence*, 1957
oil on canvas
10-1/16 x 12-1/16
Similar to the works exhibited in Davis' first one-man show at the Dupont Theatre Gallery in 1959.
- * 24. *Diagnols* (sic), 1960
acrylic on canvas
10 1/8 x 11 7/8
Ref: Wall, Don. "Gene Davis and the Issue of Complexity," *Studio International*, vol. 180, #927 (Nov. 1970), pp. 188-191.
An early pin-stripe painting done freehand during Davis' period of experimentation with stripes in different formats. This is unusual in that the stripes are not oriented vertically on the canvas, but cover it from corner to opposite corner.
- * 25. *Purple and Black*, 1961
acrylic on canvas
12 x 13-3/16
- * 26. *Edge Stripes*, 1962
acrylic on canvas
32 7/8 x 32 7/8
This work shows Davis' developing tendency to cluster stripes of one or two colors in certain areas of a canvas striped evenly from edge to edge. Here the painting is composed of essentially two clusters, one at the left edge and the other comprising the remainder of the canvas.
- * 27. *Black Grey Beat*, 1964
acrylic on canvas
91 x 185 1/4
Exhib: *The Responsive Eye*, The Museum of Modern Art, New York (1965), cat. no. 30, ill. pp. 14-15 (introd. by William C. Seitz); National Collection of Fine Arts, Washington, D. C. (1968-70).
Additional Ref: Stevens, Elisabeth. "The Washington Color Painters," *Arts Magazine*, vol. 40, #1 (Nov. 1965), p. 31.
During the middle-sixties Davis never varied from compositions of equal-width stripes in an over-all distribution. These provided an effect matrix for what he termed "color orchestration." Stripe clusters at intervals provided resting points for the eye. Davis has compared the monotonous repetitive effect of these works to the bassoon in a Vivaldi concerto.
- * 28. *Cool Sling*, 1964
acrylic on canvas
57 1/2 x 69 7/8

- * 29. *Black Rhythm*, 1964
acrylic on canvas
88 $\frac{5}{8}$ x 84 $\frac{1}{8}$
Exhib: *The Responsive Eye*, The Museum of Modern Art, New York (1965), cat. no. 31 (introd. by William C. Seitz).
- * 30. *Sour Ball Beat*, c. 1964
acrylic on canvas
42 $\frac{1}{8}$ x 50
- * 31. *Untitled*, c. 1964
acrylic on canvas
32 x 42
- * 32. *Scarlet Hop*, c. 1964-65
acrylic on canvas
75 $\frac{5}{8}$ x 95 $\frac{5}{8}$
- * 33. *Untitled*, c. 1965
acrylic on canvas
57 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 70

THOMAS DOWNING

Born in 1928 in Suffolk, Va. Studied at Randolph-Macon College and Pratt Institute. Traveled in Europe in 1951 on a grant from the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts. Attended the Académie Julian in Paris and studied in 1954 with Kenneth Noland at Catholic University. Associated in 1957 with the Washington Workshop Center for the Arts and in 1958 with the Sculptor's Studio. Taught in Washington, D. C. and Virginia public schools and at the Corcoran School of Art, 1967-70. Lives in New York City.

- * 34. *Oregon*, 1955
acrylic on canvas
88 x 102
Exhib: *Washington—Twenty Years*, Baltimore Museum of Art (May 12-June 21, 1970), cat. no. 16.
Cat. nos. 34 and 35 are rare examples of the thin loose washes of color Downing was painting at the time he met Kenneth Noland at Catholic University. Noland's insights into the work of Pollock, Rothko, Frankenthaler, etc. were a great influence on Downing at this point in his career.
- 35. *Untitled*, c. 1955
acrylic on canvas
81 x 79 $\frac{3}{4}$
- * 36. *Untitled*, 1959
acrylic on canvas
71 x 77 $\frac{7}{8}$
Pouring and washing, dripping and smearing paint soon left Downing dissatisfied. Influenced by Noland's target paintings and Howard Mehring's 1958 all-over works (Downing was sharing a studio with Mehring at this time), Downing painted these small pale rambling dots. He used the dot to convey pure color as well as to create an overall pulsating field.
- * 37. *Untitled*, c. 1960
acrylic on canvas
95 x 87 $\frac{3}{4}$

The dots are now arranged in a more formalized grid pattern with a play in space resulting from contrasts of focus and overlapping layers of depth.

- * 38. *Untitled*, c. 1961-62
acrylic on canvas
103 x 103
A more formal geometric grid arrangement with a central square of dots within a diamond shape. The enclosed form in the center emphasizes the expansion of the totality.
- * 39. *Four, Blue, Five*, 1962
acrylic on canvas
66 $\frac{7}{8}$ x 66 $\frac{7}{8}$
Color as light is the focus in this work. Fewer, larger, closer dots, in a less formal composition, allow color to bear more of the expressive burden. The dots appear to float in real space in front of the canvas. Downing has referred to these paintings as "sheets," rather than fields of color, because a "sheet suggests a spatial definition which a field does not."
- * 40. *Green Center*, 1962
acrylic on canvas
62 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 65 $\frac{5}{8}$
- * 41. *Untitled*, c. 1962
acrylic on canvas
66-3/16 x 66-3/16
- 42. *Untitled*, c. 1961-62
acrylic on canvas
95 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 95 $\frac{1}{2}$
- * 43. *Rivet Lilt*, c. 1962
acrylic on canvas
90 x 91
Exhib: National Collection of Fine Arts, Washington, D. C. (1966-70).
- * 44. *Red Shade*, 1963
acrylic on canvas
80 x 80
A more open, dial arrangement of the dots.
- * 45. *Blue Tender*, c. 1963
acrylic on canvas
96 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 93 $\frac{1}{2}$
- * 46. *Bahama Air*, 1964
acrylic on canvas
53 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 53 $\frac{1}{4}$
The center dots of the dial are eliminated, leaving a ring. The colors of the dots establish sub-sets—a square and a diamond within the ring—producing a shift in the eye from one reading to another.
- * 47. *Evening Turn*, 1964
acrylic on canvas
43 $\frac{1}{8}$ x 43 $\frac{1}{8}$
Ref: Alloway, Lawrence. *Nine Contemporary Painters USA*, Washington, D. C.: Pan American Union, 1964.

48. *Billie's Ring*, 1965
acrylic on canvas
95½ x 94
- * 49. *ViVi*, 1965
acrylic on canvas
51¾ x 52½
- * 50. *Duchess*, c. 1966-67
acrylic on canvas
28 x 49-3/16
Ref: Harithas, James. *Thomas Downing Recent Paintings*, Washington, D. C.: The Corcoran Gallery of Art, 1966-67. Dissatisfaction with the "diamond" solution to the problem of canvas shape led Downing to the use of the parallelogram. Here three parallelograms with horizontal stripes are joined together.
- * 51. *Twelve*, c. 1967
acrylic on canvas
91¼ x 121
Downing's involvement with space is frank and open in this work of the *Plank* series where projection from the wall is actually structured.
- * 52. *Fold Eleven*, 1968
acrylic on canvas
48 x 118½
The planks are now formed so that they appear to be unfolding from the wall and traditional vanishing point perspective has been replaced with isometric projection. *Folds* such as this were sized first then tacked to pre-cut shapes and covered with more than one dense layer of pigment for a resistant surface. The three-dimensional structured illusion is countered, in an interesting antithesis, by the explicit shaping of the canvas.
53. *Ring Seven*, 1969
acrylic on canvas
109 x 109
Late in 1968 Downing turned away from illusionism back to the dot in larger, more sophisticated ring paintings with a new color sense and a new luminosity.
- * 54. *Grid Seven*, 1969
acrylic on canvas
77 x 132
Ref: Baro, Gene. *Thomas Downing Paintings*, Washington, D. C.: Pyramid Galleries Ltd. (Oct.-Nov. 1970).
In 1970 Downing returned to the grid format extended laterally in space. He explored color in series in these new works concentrating on pale yellows, browns and blues.

HARRY EISENBERG

Born March 1907 in Pennsylvania. Studied at Carnegie Institute of Technology, Pittsburgh and Duquesne Universities. Exhibited in the 6th, 7th, 9th, and 10th Annual Area Exhibitions at The Corcoran Gallery of Art in 1951, 52, 55, and 56. Lives in Washington, D. C.

55. *Untitled*, 1955
oil on canvas
17-13/16 x 38

ALAN FENTON

Born July 29, 1927 in Cleveland, Ohio. Studied Cleveland School of Art, Pratt Institute (B.F.A.) with Jack Tworkov, and the Art Students League of New York with Adolph Gottlieb. Lives in New York City.

56. *Untitled*, 1962
oil on board
13¾ x 13¾
- * 57. *Lindholm III*, 1963
oil on canvas
21½ x 26½
58. *Kinsman I*, 1963
oil on canvas
96 x 78
Exhib: *SECA, Art for the Collector*, San Francisco Museum of Art (Sept. 6-Sept. 29, 1963).
These three canvases which represent Fenton's work of the early 1960's all combine sharply defined and freely brushed areas with a few remaining drips and spatters. The influence of Tworkov and de Kooning (especially his work after 1958) is evident.

MICHAEL GOLDBERG

Born in 1924 in New York City. Studied at the Art Students League of New York, City College of New York, and the Hans Hofmann School of Fine Arts. Lives in New York City.

- * 59. *New Canaan*, 1959
oil on canvas
30 x 35
Shows the influence of de Kooning and, especially, Hofmann, with a main focus on planes in space.
60. *Untitled*, 1963
oil on canvas
14 x 16
61. *Hill #12*, c. 1963
oil on canvas
44½ x 39
Goldberg worked very wet and then scraped, smeared, and scratched away at the surface of this painting. This is a typical example of his more open style after 1960.

ROBERT HUOT

Born 1935 in Staten Island, New York. Studied at Wagner College (B.S. in Chemistry). Lives in New Burlington, New York.

- * 62. *Untitled*, 1961
oil on canvas
24 x 25¾
63. *Untitled*, 1964
acrylic on canvas
13-15/16 x 13
One of the few really minimal works in the collection, this painting shows the reductive simplicity Huot developed after earlier gestural works like cat. no. 62. This later work consists of only two lines veering off opposite edges of a color field.

PAUL JENKINS

Born 1923 in Kansas City, Missouri. Attended Kansas Atyari Institute, 1940, and the Art Students League of New York, 1948-51. Traveled through Spain, Italy and France in 1953. Settled in Paris and had his first one-man show there in 1954. Presently lives in New York City.

- * 64. *Eye of the Dove—Talisman Profile*, 1959

oil on canvas

40 x 30

Ref: *Paul Jenkins*, Hanover: Kestner—Gesellschaft, 1964, p. 26.

In this work gestural painting is tempered by the artist's Oriental sensibility, producing a simple yet powerful statement in black and red.

MATSUMI KANEMITSU

Born May 28, 1922 in Ogden City, Utah. Studied at the Art Students League of New York with Karl Metzler and Leger. A large retrospective of his work was held at the Akron Art Institute, Akron, Ohio. Lives in New York City.

65. *Border Shift*, 1959

oil on canvas

71¾ x 59¾

A good example from Jenkins' first series, the *Eyes of the Dove*, painted in 1959. "The eyes of the dove see everything," he has stated, "but never the same thing twice" (cf. Kestner—Gesellschaft). Jenkins alternated at this time between oil and acrylic paint, poured and spread with an ivory knife. Cat. no. 64 tentatively suggests the mature style he later developed.

FRANZ KLINE

Born in 1910 in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania. Studied at Boston University and Heatherly's School, London. Taught at Black Mountain College in 1952, Pratt Institute in 1953 and the Philadelphia Museum School in 1954. Died May 13, 1962 of rheumatic heart disease. Retrospectives include the Washington Gallery of Modern Art (1962), the Marlborough-Gerson Gallery, New York (1967), and the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (1968).

- * 66. *Untitled*, 1961

oil on canvas

72½ x 100½

Exhib: Washington Gallery of Modern Art, Washington, D. C. (1966-68), The Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D. C. (1968-70).

Ref: Hudson, Andrew. "Viewpoint on Art—Gallery's Permanent Collection Delights," *Washington Post* (April 8, 1966), p. G7, ill.

Kline painted large black on white calligraphic forms such as this after seeing a portion of one of his drawings magnified in a Bell-Opticon in 1949.

WILLEM DE KOONING

Born April 24, 1904 in Rotterdam, Holland. Studied at the Academie voor Beeldende Kunsten en Technische Wetenschappen, a school of fine and applied arts, 1916-24. Came to America 1926. Shared a studio with Arshile Gorky in the 1930's. Worked on the Federal Arts Project 1935. Taught at Black Mountain College in 1948 and Yale University in 1950-51. Retrospectives include the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (1953), the Venice Biennale (1954), the Smith College Museum of Art and the Haydn Gallery, M.I.T. (1965). Lives in East Hampton, Long Island.

- * 67. *The Wave*, 1942-44

oil on masonite

48 x 48

Exhib: *Barnett Newman—Willem de Kooning*, Allan Stone Gallery, New York (Oct. 23-Nov. 17, 1962), ill. p. 2; Baltimore Museum of Art (1963-64); The Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D. C. (1968-70).

Additional Ref: Hess, Thomas B. *Willem de Kooning*, New York: George Braziller, 1959, p. 18, ill. p. 61.

An excellent example of de Kooning's style after 1942 in which automatism, a thinly-painted surface, calligraphy, and semi-geometric, quasi-biomorphic floating forms are combined. The rectangle in the upper right, which stabilizes the curvilinear shapes, is a variation on the window theme which de Kooning began to employ in the 1930's. He used the window form to refer to the "no-environment," the dislocated space in which the flux of daily life takes place.

- * 68. *Landscape*, 1948

pastel and pencil on paper

11 x 13½

The influence of Arshile Gorky can be seen in cat. nos. 68 and 71. In both de Kooning utilized graceful Gorkyesque calligraphy to form his compositions. These lines do not describe perimeter or form; they exist only as independent expressions of the artist's gestures.

- * 69. *Untitled*, 1950

enamel on paper

21½ x 29½

Exhib: Baltimore Museum of Art (1960-64).

One of the many black and white works done in enamel during a period in which de Kooning attempted to simplify and purify his pictorial problems.

- * 70. *Woman*, c. 1951

oil on board

25½ x 19½

A representative example of de Kooning's *Woman* series of the early and mid-fifties. In these he returned to the figure but in a highly fragmented fashion which probably derived from his earlier practice of cutting up old figure drawings, mixing the parts, and pasting them back together. Line is subordinated to gestures with thick paint. Contours are open, allowing the figure and the environment to flow together. Any reading of exact position in space is impossible.

- * 71. *Untitled*, 1951
oil on paper fused to canvas
22 x 30
Exhib: Baltimore Museum of Art (1961-64).
- * 72. *Woman*, c. 1952-53
pastel on paper fused to canvas
22½ x 17½

MORRIS LOUIS

Born November 28, 1912, Morris Louis Bernstein. Studied at Baltimore City College and the Maryland Institute of Fine and Applied Arts. Worked on a Government Treasury Relief Project, 1933-36. Became an instructor at the Washington Workshop Center for the Arts in 1952. Shared a studio with Kenneth Noland 1953-55. Died September 7, 1962 of cancer of the lung. Retrospectives include the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York (1963), the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam (1965) and the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (1967).

- * 73. *Spreading*, 1954
acrylic on canvas
79½ x 97¼
Exhib: *Morris Louis 1912-1962. Memorial Exhibition. Paintings from 1954-1960.* Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York (Sept.-Oct. 1963), cat. no. 3, p. 26, ill. pl. 3; *Morris Louis*, Washington Gallery of Modern Art, Washington, D. C. (Mar. 4-Apr. 30, 1967), cat. no. 4; The Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D. C. (1968-69).
Additional Ref: Rosenblum, Robert. "Morris Louis at the Guggenheim Museum," *Art International*, vol. 7, #6 (Dec. 5, 1963), p. 24; Hudson, Andrew. *Ten Washington Artists: 1950-1970*, Edmonton, Canada: Edmonton Art Gallery (Feb. 5-Mar. 8, 1970), ill. p. 36; Fried, Michael. *Morris Louis*, New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc. Pub., 1971, ill. pl. 29.

An excellent example of the type of stain painting which heralded Louis' breakthrough, after his now historical 1953 confrontation with Helen Frankenthaler's *Mountains and Sea*. Louis poured specially constituted Magna acrylic, in which the beeswax binder was left out for more liquidity, on unstretched unprepared canvas, folded and sloped horizontally, to achieve this kind of effect.

- * 74. *Untitled*, 1956
acrylic on canvas
76½ x 106½
Exhib: Martha Jackson Gallery, New York (1957); *Morris Louis*, Washington Gallery of Modern Art, Washington, D. C. (Mar. 4-Apr. 30, 1967), cat. no. 7; The Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D. C. (1967); *The Disappearance and Reappearance of the Image*, International Art Program, National Collection of Fine Arts (traveling in Eastern Europe, Nov. 1, 1968-Dec. 31, 1969).

This is a rare surviving work from the period 1955-57 (Louis himself destroyed as many of these works as he could). It is one of the gestural works shown by Louis in his 1957 Martha Jackson Gallery one-man show. This show was both a critical and a financial failure. Louis had attempted, in these few years, to follow the direct lead of Pollock but such a personal approach proved, for him, a dead end.

- * 75. *Aurora*, 1958
acrylic on canvas
93¼ x 175
Exhib: National Collection of Fine Arts, Washington, D. C. (May 1968-Nov. 1970); *Washington—Twenty Years*, Baltimore Museum of Art (May 12-June 21, 1970), cat. no. 37.

In 1957 Louis returned to the painting of veils in the manner of cat. no. 73. 75 is a powerful example of a fully realized veil and it is so large across that vertical divisions can still be seen where Louis had to fold the canvas and work on it in sections.

- * 76. *Faces*, 1959
acrylic on canvas
91 x 136
Exhib: *Important Contemporary Paintings and Sculpture*, Parke-Bernet Galleries, New York, 1970, ill. p. 35.
Additional Ref: Fried, Michael. *Morris Louis*, New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc. Pub., 1971, ill. pl. 56.

- * 77. *Gamma*, 1960
acrylic on canvas
81 x 53½
Exhib: *Three New American Painters: Louis, Noland, Olitski*, Norman MacKenzie Gallery, Regina, Canada (Jan. 11-Feb. 15, 1963), p. 5, ill. p. 10 (introd. by Clement Greenberg); The Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D. C. (1967-68); *The Disappearance and Reappearance of the Image*, International Art Program, National Collection of Fine Arts (traveling in Eastern Europe, Nov. 1, 1969-Dec. 31, 1969), ill. p. 35.

Additional Ref: Hudson, Andrew. *Ten Washington Artists: 1950-1970*, Edmonton, Canada: Edmonton Art Gallery (Feb. 5-Mar. 8, 1970), ill. p. 41; *Morris Louis*, New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc. Pub., 1970, ill. p. 103.

One of the last and smallest veils, *Gamma* prompted critic Clement Greenberg to say in 1963, "The effects we see in it are what first established Louis' originality on the American art scene" (cf. *Three New American Painters*).

- * 78. *Beta Upsilon*, 1960
acrylic on canvas
102½ x 243

One of the *Unfurled* or *Alpha-Omega* series. Painted streams run diagonally down the space where empty canvas was left in the veils. In the center, where the veil image had been placed, the canvas is now bare. These paintings have been acclaimed as Louis' finest works.

* 79. *Pillar of Celebration*, 1961

acrylic on canvas

87½ x 55

Exhib: *Toward a New Abstraction*, New York: The Jewish Museum (May 19-Sept. 15, 1963), cat. no. 18, pp. 18-19, ill. pl. 18; The Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D. C. (1968); *The Disappearance and Reappearance of the Image*, International Art Program, National Collection of Fine Arts (traveling in Eastern Europe. Nov. 1, 1968-Dec. 31, 1969).

Additional Ref: Benson, Leger. "The Washington Scene," *Art International*, vol. 13, #10 (Christmas 1969), p. 37.

An early example of the stripe, or pillar, paintings Louis did just before his death. Cat. no. 79 is stretched with the stripes oriented vertically, not diagonally as those he directed to be done at the very end. These works are thought to have been influenced by the ideas of Kenneth Noland.

HOWARD MEHRING

Born February 19, 1931 in Washington, D. C. Studied at Wilson Teachers College (B.S. 1953) and Catholic University (M.F.A. 1955). Shared a studio with Thomas Downing 1956-58. With Downing and others helped found the Origo Gallery in 1959. Traveled in Europe on a grant from the Woodward Foundation in 1961. Lives in Washington, D. C.

* 80. *Untitled*, 1954

oil on canvas

37 x 22

This was painted at the time Mehring was one of the instructors at the Washington Workshop Center for the Arts. During this extremely experimental early period he was greatly influenced by his contacts with Kenneth Noland. This work is similar in form not only to Noland's early work (see cat. no. 10) but to Gorky, Gottlieb and Klee.

81. *Untitled*, 1957

acrylic on canvas

52 x 42

82. *Untitled*, 1957

acrylic on canvas

30⅞ x 31

Mehring seems to have been carrying out his own version of Helen Frankenthaler's exploitation of the possibilities inherent in Pollock's method of drawing with spilled paint.

83. *Untitled*, 1957

acrylic on canvas

51½ x 65½

A crayoned X is introduced to organize the spilled areas. The Melzac Collection also includes a series of four drawings, including a similar X in red crayon and blue wash, which may have been studies for this painting.

* 84. *Untitled*, 1957

acrylic on canvas

106 x 114

A simple pinkish-orange line gesture has been repeated evenly across the surface of this canvas with bluish "footprints" in a different pattern placed behind. This perhaps derives from earlier experiments with designs that look like wallpaper.

* 85. *Untitled*, c. 1957

acrylic on canvas

101½ x 127

This is a Pollock-like, poured, dripped, and spattered, abstract expressionist work. Mehring used stronger colors, more spots, and less lines than Pollock however; he created dense yet large and open rhythms similar to those in Pollock's best works.

86. *Untitled*, 1958

acrylic on canvas

60-5/16 x 58⅝

A poured work, similar to several shown in Mehring's one-man exhibition at the Origo Gallery in 1959.

* 87. *Untitled*, 1958

acrylic on canvas

52 x 60

88. *Untitled*, 1958

acrylic on canvas

33-1/16 x 102¾

This is a variation on the all-over theme in which metallic paint and tonal modifications create a pulsating perspective. Mehring was one of many in Washington experimenting with metallic paints at this time.

* 89. *Untitled*, c. 1958

acrylic on canvas

74⅞ x 77⅞

* 90. *Untitled*, 1959

acrylic on canvas

61⅝ x 50

Similar to the works of Mark Tobey—dabs of paint dispersed evenly over the entire canvas, pushed up close to the foreground, but allowing occasional glimpses into a deeper middle area.

* 91. *Untitled*, 1960

acrylic on canvas

100⅞ x 100⅞

This all-over orange painting and an all-over beige (cat. no. 92) are similar to the paintings shown in 1959 at Origo and in 1960 and 1970 at the Jefferson Place Gallery. Small dots of color maintain an even attention over the entire canvas surface. Dots of different sizes create a sense of expansion and contraction and the surfaces seem to "breathe color." These works are open-ended and their even lighting is reminiscent of the *Water Lilies* (1903-08) of French Impressionist, Claude Monet.

* 92. *Untitled*, 1960

acrylic on canvas

92½ x 116

93. *Untitled*, 1961

acrylic on canvas

49 x 46

Mehring began to feel in 1960 that his work was getting too diffused. Seeking a way to introduce some structure, he organized this painting into a large stippled circle on a stippled field of a different hue. The Melzac Collection also includes some stippled squares on fields from this same period (see cat. no. 97).

- * 94. *Untitled*, 1961
acrylic on canvas
68 x 68

Exhib: *Washington—Twenty Years*, Baltimore Museum of Art (May 12-June 21, 1970), cat. no. 43.

The following year he decided that a better way to bring his work back into focus would be to paste or sew together pieces of all-over stippled canvas into regular geometric patterns. This way he could make the most of the tendency of his all-over paintings to "heat-up" at the edge. He did a great many works with this same basic squares-within-squares composition, varying them only in accent and color, like variations on a theme in music. Noland's geometric paintings were influential on Mehring's move to structure.

- * 95. *Untitled*, 1961
acrylic on canvas
31 x 30-9/16

96. *Untitled*, 1961
acrylic on canvas
68¾ x 67-11/16

- * 97. *Untitled*, 1961
acrylic on canvas
30 x 23½

98. *Aura II*, 1961
acrylic on canvas
94¾ x 96

- * 99. *Untitled*, 1962
acrylic on canvas
69½ x 69¼

- *100. *The Key*, 1963
acrylic on canvas
76 x 76

Exhib: *Reflections 1963*, Adams-Morgan Gallery, Washington, D. C. (Nov. 3-22, 1963), cat. no. 7; *Post Painterly Abstraction*, Los Angeles County Museum of Art (April 23-June 7, 1964), cat. no. 65.

Additional Ref: Ahlander, Leslie Judd. Review, *Washington Post* (Nov. 10, 1963).

A sewn stippled work with inverted L's back-to-back instead of squares-within-squares. One critic said, "*The Key* uses still another image in which deep orange areas pull against the cold green and black of the center. This is beautiful painting, working again as the very early all-overall patterns worked to the full potential of color, pattern, and light" (cf. Ahlander).

- *101. *Untitled*, 1964
acrylic on canvas
82½ x 69⅞

Exhib: *Two Generations of Color Painting*, Institute of Contemporary Art, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia (Oct. 1-Nov. 6, 1970), ill. p. 13.

The stippling has been dropped completely, leaving inverted L's in flat colors. These works were taped and painted with a roller and acrylic Liquitex. Mehring saw these paintings as parodies of the canvas edge and wanted his viewers to visualize the inversion of that edge to form the L's in order to achieve a sense of movement without relying on stippled dots. Mehring won the 17th Annual Area Show at the Corcoran in 1965 with a painting of this type.

- *102. *Untitled*, 1964
acrylic on canvas
82¾ x 44-3/16

Mehring's next move was to hard-edged L's going only in one direction (cat. nos. 102 and 103). He later turned from the L to the E, T and Z.

- *103. *Untitled*, 1964
acrylic on canvas
58 x 24⅝

KENNETH NOLAND

Born in 1924 in Ashville, North Carolina. Studied at Black Mountain College with Ilya Bolotowsky and Josef Albers in 1946-48. Studied in Paris 1948-49 with Ossip Zadkine. Moved in late 1949 to Washington, D. C. and began to teach at the Institute of Contemporary Arts and Catholic University and later the Washington Workshop Center for the Arts. Shared a studio with Morris Louis from 1953-55. Moved to New York in 1961. Presently teaches at Bennington College and lives in Vermont.

- *104. *Untitled*, c. 1952-53
oil on canvas
19¼ x 15¼

This small Klee-like painting is a rare example of a pre-stain work.

- *105. *Rest*, 1958
acrylic on canvas
70 x 67⅞

Exhib: *Three New American Painters: Louis, Noland, Olitski*, Norman MacKenzie Gallery, Regina, Canada (Jan. 11-Feb. 15, 1963), ill. p. 11, introd. by Clement Greenberg; *The Corcoran Gallery of Art*, Washington, D. C. (1969-1970); *Washington—Twenty Years*, Baltimore Museum of Art (May 12-June 21, 1970), cat. no. 48.

Additional Ref: Hudson, Andrew. *Ten Washington Artists: 1950-1970*, Edmonton, Canada: Edmonton Art Gallery, 1970, ill. p. 38.

A work painted after Noland's association with Morris Louis and Clement Greenberg. In target paintings such as this, Noland worked on the floor from the center out, leaving splashes and rings of bare canvas to produce a feeling of expansion in space.

- *106. *Split*, 1959
acrylic on canvas
94 x 94¾
Exhib: The Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D. C. (1967-70).
Ref: Wolfe, Thomas. "Artist's New Technique Goes All Over," *Washington Post* (Jan. 5, 1960), ill.; Richard, Paul. "But Not Forgotten," *Washington Post* (Dec. 26, 1970), ill.
This is a slightly more complex variation on the target theme in which a diamond is placed inside concentric circles. Works such as this were shown by Noland in 1960 at the Jefferson Place Gallery.
- *107. *Quiet Night*, c. 1960-61
acrylic on canvas
69¾ x 69⅞
Exhib: The Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D. C. (1969); *Washington—Twenty Years*, Baltimore Museum of Art (May 12-June 21, 1970), cat. no. 49.
In 1960-61 Noland replaced the concentric rings with a single ellipsoid form on a colored field.
- *108. *Blue Horizon*, 1963
acrylic on canvas
72 x 72
Exhib: *Kenneth Noland*, Andre Emmerich Gallery, New York (April 23-May 13, 1963), ill. p. 5.
Additional Ref: Fried, Michael. "New York Letters," *Art International*, vol. VII, #5 (May 25, 1963), pp. 60-61.
By the time Noland's early chevrons were shown at the Andre Emmerich Gallery, Noland had been living away from Washington for almost two years. V-forms cover the entire surface of these works, no bare canvas is left, and space is very flat. Noland, at this point, switched from oil-compatible Magna acrylic paint to water-compatible Aqua-tec.
- *109. *East—West*, c. 1963
acrylic on canvas
70-5/16 x 69½
- *110. *Tripex*, 1963
acrylic on canvas
105 x 70
Exhib: The Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D. C. (1969).
- *111. *Shoot*, 1964
acrylic on canvas
103½ x 126¾
Exhib: The Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D. C. (1967-70); *Washington—Twenty Years*, Baltimore Museum of Art (May 12-June 21, 1970), cat. no. 50.
Additional Ref: Forgey, Benjamin. "Now There's A Painting Gap," *Evening Star* (Dec. 18, 1970), p. C-10, ill.
- *112. *Sarah's Reach*, 1964
acrylic on canvas
94⅛ x 91⅝

Exhib: XXXII Venice Biennale, Venice, Italy (1965); Washington Gallery of Modern Art, Washington, D. C. (1966-67); The Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D. C. (1967-69).

Ref: Hudson, Andrew. "Kenneth Noland: Sarah's Reach—A Mixture of Stillness and Movement, of Austerity," *Washington Post Potomac*, (Sunday, May 8, 1966), pp. 14-17, ill. p. 14; Hudson, Andrew. *Ten Washington Artists: 1950-1970*, Edmonton, Canada: Edmonton Art Gallery, 1970, ill. p. 45; Nadelman, Sheldon. "Sixties Art: Some Philosophical Perspectives," *Perspecta II* (The Yale Architectural Journal), ill. p. 81.

Image-edge relationship is of primary importance as the chevron here is asymmetrically placed. "The outer blue V-shape appears to be gently easing the whole formation upwards and out of the picture by pushing down on its top corners. This crucial involvement of the corners . . . sets off a tension along the left and right edges of the format" (cf. Hudson, *Sarah's Reach*).

JULES OLITSKI

Born March 27, 1922 in Gomel, Russia. Studied at New York University (B.A. and M.A.), the National Academy of Design and the Beaux Arts Institute, New York. Also studied at the Académie de la Grande Chaumière and the Ossip Zadkine School, Paris. Taught at C.W. Post College in 1956-63 and Bennington College in 1963-67. Lives in New York City and Shaftesbury, Vermont.

- *113. *Cadmium Orange of Dr. Frankenstein*, 1962
acrylic on canvas
90⅛ x 80⅛
Exhib: One-man show, Poindexter Gallery, New York, 1963.
Ref: Rose, Barbara. "New York Letter," *Art International*, vol. VII, #4 (April 25, 1963), p. 57, ill.
These paintings by Olitski date from an early period in his work, before he started spray painting. Cat. no. 113 is characteristic of his paintings of 1962-63 in which he placed "broad paths of color around a roughly circular core," the core not necessarily falling in the exact center of the painting. None of these paths were allowed to go completely around the core without a break. The paths never touched each other but were separated from each other by small areas of bare canvas. Olitski used negative space as a compositional element of equal weight with the positive space. "This inventive use of the background, coupled with asymmetry, provides an alternative to geometric painting" (cf. Rose, Barbara).
- *114. *Orange Column*, c. 1962
acrylic on canvas
92 x 72
This work consists mostly of negative space, the painted circle and "column" taking up less than one-half of the canvas area.

PAUL REED

Born March 28, 1919 in Washington, D. C. Studied San Diego State College and the Corcoran School of Art, 1937-38. Worked as a graphic designer in New York from 1944-50, then returned to Washington. Started to paint seriously in 1953. Studied with Jacob Kainen. Worked as graphic designer in charge of all publicity design for the Peace Corps 1962-70. Lives in Arlington, Virginia.

115. *Untitled*, c. 1955

oil on masonite
19 x 24

This gestural work was done at a time when Reed's chief stimulus was Gene Davis who was also painting works in the abstract expressionist mode at this time.

*116. *Untitled*, 1961

acrylic on canvas
34 x 33

This was done after Reed switched from oil to acrylic Hyplar, a water base paint. Howard Mehring also experimented with similar wallpaper patterns (see cat. nos. 81 and 83). At this time Reed was beginning to adapt some of the methods he practiced in graphic design to his painting.

*117. *Untitled*, 1962

acrylic on canvas
22 x 22

*118. *Untitled*, 1962

acrylic on canvas
59 x 63-3/16

Reed's characteristic early bean-shape, developed in an attempt to define the rhythm of centrifugal movement, is present here. The late cut-outs of Matisse provided inspiration for these works as well as the targets of Kenneth Noland.

*119. #8, 1963

acrylic on canvas
44 x 44 and 15 1/8 x 15 1/8

This is a key work from the series in which Reed first delineated his growing interest in space. A small satellite painting, or "fragment," is included as part of the totality. This fragment contains a curvilinear shape which appears to have broken away from its larger companion, composed of a jig-saw puzzle shape divided internally into hard-edged areas of color. These fragments enabled Reed to control some of the space outside his canvas.

*120. #22B, 1963

acrylic on canvas
21 x 21

A circle of contrasting color is here placed on a set of revolving bean shapes. This work presages Reed's move in 1965 to a suppression of the beans into a single centered disc.

*121. *Untitled*, 1963

acrylic on canvas
21 x 21

*122. #19D, 1965

acrylic on canvas
26 1/2 x 34

Cat. nos. 122 and 123 are excellent examples of the series for which the artist is best known—a centered disc of color on a field cut diagonally in opposite corners by triangular wedges of different color. These works, in which the discs appear to hover in real space in front of the canvas, led Reed into more complex spatial relations in his subsequent work.

123. *Thalene III*, 1965

acrylic on canvas
55 1/2 x 45

Exhib: *Paintings by Paul Reed*, Northern Virginia Community College (May 10-June 12, 1971).

MILTON RESNICK

Born January 8, 1917 in Bratslav, Russia. Studied at Pratt Institute and the American Artists School. Lived and worked in Paris 1946-48. Returned to the United States in 1948 and studied with Hans Hofmann. Since 1954 has taught at Pratt Institute, University of California at Berkeley, University of Wisconsin at Madison, and New York University. Lives in New York City.

*124. *Untitled*, 1948

oil on wood
36 x 45 1/2

This dates from a period in which Resnick was influenced by his friend Willem de Kooning and was experimenting along similar lines. A predominantly white background is filled with linear Gorkyesque forms pushed up close to the foreground.

LARRY RIVERS

Born August 17, 1923 in the Bronx, New York. Began a musical career as a jazz saxophonist in 1940 and studied at the Julliard School of Music in 1944. Began to paint in 1945 and studied with Hans Hofmann in New York and Provincetown, 1947-48. Studied with William Baziotas at New York University; graduated in 1951. A retrospective of his work was held at the Rose Art Museum, Brandeis University in 1965. Lives in New York City.

125. *Front and Side View*, 1956

oil on canvas
21 1/4 x 17 3/4

A typical early work in which figurative realism is combined with the technique of abstract expressionism. The inclusion of one subject in two different views on the same canvas is similar to montage in film and actually dates back to ancient times.

126. *Head of Berdie*, c. 1956

bronze
12 x 9 1/2

This is one of only two such bronze heads in existence. These were made from an original plaster cast by Rivers which since then has been accidentally broken.

WILLIAM SOMMER

Born January 18, 1867 in Detroit, Michigan. Worked in Boston, Cleveland, and New York as a commercial lithographer. Studied art in Munich with Professor Herterich. A founding member of the Kokoon Art Club in Cleveland, 1912. Worked on the Public Works of Art Project, the Treasury Art Project, and for the Works Progress Administration in the 1930's. Died June 20, 1949. Retrospectives include the Akron Art Institute, Akron, Ohio (1948) and the Cleveland Museum of Art (1950).

127. *Boy with Green Apple*, 1904

oil on canvas

24 x 20

This portrait, strongly influenced by Cezanne, is one of the earliest dated works in the Melzac Collection.

128. *Martha*, 1911

oil on canvas

24 x 17

129. *Untitled*, 1933

ink on paper

17 $\frac{7}{8}$ x 11 $\frac{1}{2}$

130. *Untitled*, c. 1935

collage on paper

6 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 8-5/16

131. *Untitled*, 1943

watercolor and pencil on paper

14 $\frac{5}{8}$ x 10 $\frac{1}{2}$

These five works represent but a fraction of the drawings, watercolors, oils and collages by Sommer in the Melzac Collection. The influence of Sommer's schooling in Munich, as well as his great passion for Cezanne, is evident in most of these works. His sharp, wiry line has been compared to Charles Demuth's.

GEORGE SPAVENTA

Born February 22, 1918 in New York City. Studied at the Leonardo Da Vinci Art School, the Beaux Arts Institute, New York, and the Académie de la Grande Chaumière, Paris. Taught sculpture at the New York Studio School. Lives in New York City.

132. *Ecce Homo*, 1956

bronze

55 x 17 x 15

This is a typical example of Spaventa's work in which his personal handling of the material is emphasized in much the same manner the action painters emphasized personal handling in their canvases. With works like this, Spaventa continues in the same sculptural tradition as Rodin, Medardo Rosso, and Giacometti.

CLYFFORD STILL

Born November 30, 1904 in Grandin, North Dakota. Studied at Spokane University. Taught at Washington University, Pullman from 1943-45 and the California School of Fine Arts, 1946-50. Helped establish the Metart Gallery in San Francisco in 1949. Retrospectives include the Albright Art Gallery, Buffalo in 1959 and the Institute of Contemporary Art, University of Pennsylvania in 1963. Lives near Westminster, Maryland.

*133. *Indian Red and Black*, 1946

oil on canvas

76 x 68 $\frac{1}{2}$

Exhib: *Paintings by Clyfford Still*, Buffalo Fine Arts Academy, Albright Art Gallery (Nov. 5-Dec. 13, 1959), cat. no. 16, ill. pl. 16; *New York School. The First Generation. Paintings of the 1940's and 1950's*, Los Angeles County Museum of Art (July 16-Aug. 1, 1965), cat. no. 109, ill. p. 192; *Important Contemporary Paintings and Sculpture*, Parke-Bernet Galleries, New York (Nov. 1970), ill. p. 21.

Additional Ref: Tuchman, Maurice. *The New York School. The First Generation*, Greenwich, Connecticut: New York Graphic Society, 1970, ill. p. 149.

This is a relatively early work of the type for which Still has become known—jagged-edged, vertically-oriented patches of flat color with no foreground/background delineation. Light patches open up the surface and there are no borders to limit the field. The colors are low-key, typical of Still's paintings previous to 1950. Works like this one were first shown in 1947 and have since been influential among scores of younger artists.

BEN (JOE) SUMMERFORD

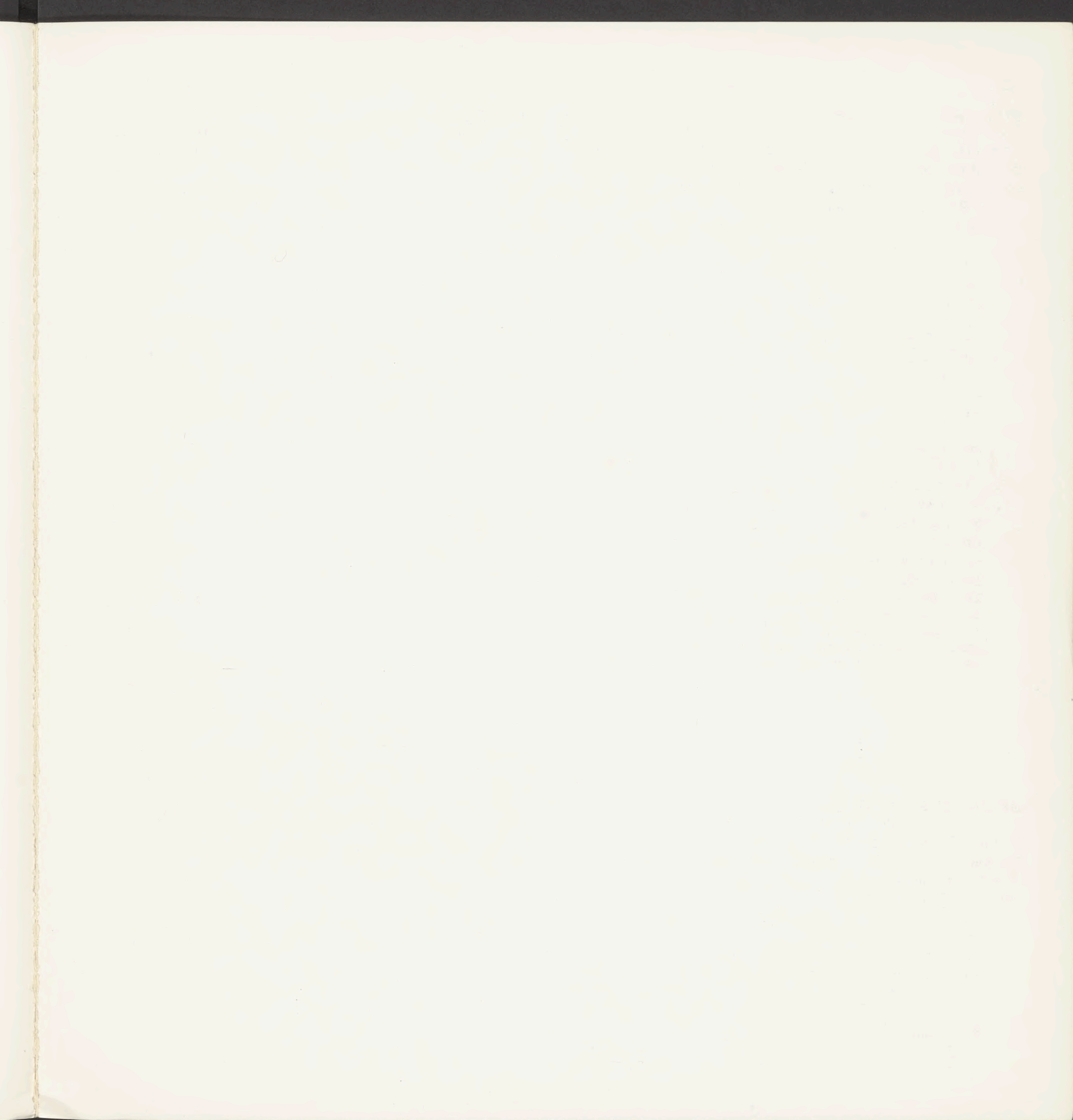
Born in 1924 in Montgomery, Alabama. Studied at American University where he got his B.A. in 1948 and his M.A. in 1956. Joined the staff of the Washington Workshop Center for the Arts in 1953. Helped found the cooperative venture that came to be the Jefferson Place Gallery in 1957. Chairman of the Art Department at American University 1958-65. Lives in Vienna, Virginia.

134. *West Virginia Mountains*, 1952

oil on canvas

23 x 35 $\frac{1}{2}$

Exhib: *Washington—Twenty Years*, Baltimore Museum of Art (May 12-June 21, 1970), cat. no. 61.



Handwritten text in a cursive script, likely a letter or document. The text is written in dark ink on aged, slightly yellowed paper. The handwriting is fluid and characteristic of the 18th or 19th century. The text is arranged in several paragraphs, with some lines indented. The right side of the page shows the binding of the book, with visible stitching or staples.



